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The naturalist and his friends

HITTING THE DARK TRAIL

STARSHINE THROUGH THIRTY YEARS OF NIGHT

BY

CLARENCE HAWKES

Author of *Shaggycoat, Black Bruin, The Wilderness Dog, The Trail to the Woods, The Little Foresters,* etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLES COPELAND
AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1915

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Published September, 1915

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DEDICATED

TO MY FRIEND

HELEN KELLER

WITH SINCERE REGARD AND KEEN APPRECIATION OF HER BRAVE STRUGGLE AND WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENTS UPON THE TRAIL OF DARKNESS AND SILENCE.

A WORD TO THE READER

THIS little volume is preëminently a book of hope, courage, and achievement, although these essentials to happiness were only attained by the author after many discouragements, struggles, and heartaches.

It is the earnest hope of the writer that the reader may not be discouraged by the strenuous character of the first few chapters, but will adopt the author's three P's, Patience, Perseverance and Pluck, and read on to the happy ending.

The courageous man, with a true standard of life's values, is not impoverished by poverty, or greatly enriched by riches, for he recognizes the fact that the only value of circumstances to him, be they good or ill, is their effect upon his own life and character.

To fight on when the battle seems lost, and to finally snatch victory from defeat, is the most sublime thing in human life.

So it is to make a better optimist and a better fighter of the reader that this book is written. If I can help you to hear songs in the silences, see sunshine in the clouds, turn seeming failure to success, and find good in all things, this book will not have been written in vain.

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NIGHT AND DEATH

Mysterious night! when our first parent knew
Thee from report Divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue?
Yet, 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus, with the host of heaven, came,
And lo! creation widened in man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O sun? or who could find,
Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind?
Why do we then shun death with anxious strife?
If light can thus deceive, therefore not life?

—Joseph Blanco White.

INTRODUCTION

A good friend is better company than a good book—Friendship for John Burroughs and Clarence Hawkes—A tragedy in the swales—Milton's "day-labor," and his blindness—A boy for fourteen years, and a man for the rest of one's life—Our debt to the naturalist.

NONE of Mr. Hawkes's books need a commentary and affidavits. His purpose is plain, his story simple, his language clear.

Most men are at their best in their work, the labor of their hands being, as perhaps nothing else of them is, the combined product of hands, head and heart—the whole man. This is particularly true of authors; so true that writers are seldom as interesting as their books. Yet this really means that the writer is a man who can most fully, and so most interestingly, express himself with his pen; for books, the best and greatest of books, are not

so interesting as men, the greatest and best of men. And indeed almost any human being—your next-door neighbor—is better than most of your books for companionship; which means, that if we knew the writers in themselves, as we know them in their books, we should have a key to many an inner room and secret chamber in their books closed to all but the intimate few.

This is truer of some books than of others, and particularly true of the poets and nature writers, whose very material is not nature, but themselves acted upon by nature. Is "Wake Robin" only a book? Has it made no difference to my joy in it that I have had John Burroughs as a guest in my home and sat at meat with him? When I read "Shaggy Coat" and "Master Friskey," "The Little Foresters," and "The Trail to the Woods," does it not matter that I have sat down and talked face to face with their author?—no, not face to face, but heart to heart, for he could not see my face.

Born with eyes that saw far beyond the range of the average child's, with a poet's love

of form and color, the child grew into a keen, eager lad of fourteen, with the joy of running streams, with the motion of frisking flying things in his feet, and the love of all live things in his heart, until one day——

I hardly dare think of that day—how often and often has Clarence Hawkes had to remember it!—whose shadow lies as black as midnight for him even over this very April morning, this day all blue and white and warm with sunshine for me in the spring of 1915. And that black day fell far away in August, 1883.

There is a story here, and it is told in this book; the story of that August day, when the boy with a new gun went with his father into the swales for woodcock, and fell all but mortally wounded, both eyes forever gone, through some fearful mischance, at the hands of his loving father.

Is there not a story here? No, not that fearful story, inevitable as it must be, but the story of that boy's fight for life—and how he won; the story of that boy's fight for work—and how he won; the story of that boy's fight

for peace and strength and inward light in the midst of this darkness and solitude,—and how he won: *this* is the manifold and human story to be told in the pages of this book. Did ever the novelist invent a more thrilling plot? Here we have truth stranger than fiction.

His books need no explanation; but surely a knowledge of this man's heroic life, how with sightless eyes he has beheld each scene of these many volumes, how "with light denied" he has worked on in the outer dark, compelling God to grant him inward light that shining across these printed pages is now the very light of day for us, and eyes, indeed, for him—I say the story of this man should be read into every line he has written about the out-of-doors to give the simple words their deep and human meaning.

> "Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?
> I fondly ask,"

says Milton. By "fondly" he means foolishly.

> ". . . But Patience, to prevent
> That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need

Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best.
. . . . . .
They also serve who only stand and wait.'"

True, but God does need man's work—"day-labor" indeed, even "with light denied," if at any cost that labor can be performed. And it was in his blindness that Milton wrote the greatest poem in the English language—his "day-labor"; and it is in his blindness—a longer, more terrible blindness than Milton's—that Clarence Hawkes has written every word of his books, drawing on that priceless gallery of outdoor scenes, hung in the halls of memory before he was fourteen years old, his little day before the long night.

What a precious thing it is to be a boy for fourteen years—and what a great thing it is to be a *man* all the rest of your life, through such grim odds!

"Eyes they have, but they see not!"

I thank you, my friend, for teaching me how to see many things in the world of field and wood about me, and many things deep in the

human heart within me, that, having eyes, I might not, but for you, have ever seen.

Very truly yours,

DALLAS LORE SHARP.

Mullein Hill, Hingham, Massachusetts.
April 10, 1915.

HITTING THE DARK TRAIL

INVICTUS

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

—William Ernest Henley.

HITTING THE DARK TRAIL

INTRODUCTORY

Why I had to write this book—Object in writing the volume—What I hope to accomplish in telling this story—The blind and the seeing—My power of visualizing the scenes of earth—The helping hand—An all-around man and an optimist.

In the Summer of 1909, in response to much urging from editor friends, I published in the *Outlook* magazine a short autobiographical article entitled "Hitting the Dark Trail."

This article attracted wide attention in this country and Europe. It was translated into foreign languages, and brought me a deluge of letters from almost every part of the English-speaking world. Ministers used it in their pulpits, in place of the Sunday morning sermon, and educators and teachers, having in charge the inspiration of youth, used the ar-

ticle freely on both public and private occasions.

My object in writing the article was to answer briefly some of the myriad questions concerning my life, which are always being shot at me from every side. But instead of quieting this fusillade, I actually increased it, while many letters even asked that I might be persuaded to write more along the same lines.

This correspondence has at length become so burdensome to me and takes up so much of my time, which to me at least is valuable, that I have again been forced to take to my typewriter in self-defense, and give the curious public that for which they are clamoring.

In so doing I have several misgivings, the first of which is that I may not be able to quiet the troubled waters, and another that I greatly detest writing about myself, and the few little insignificant things that I have done.

Biographies are well enough, and very interesting and indispensable, but autobiographies are quite another matter.

In the first place, they are very difficult to

Writing a new animal biography

write and keep the story in good taste. To say I, and I continually, from the beginning to the end of a book, and not have the Ego creep in, no matter how carefully the author guards against it, is most difficult.

Then there is in all of us an aversion to telling the whole truth about one's self, especially that which is not creditable.

Few autobiographies are written with the frankness contained in that of Anthony Trollope. Most authors would shrink from writing of themselves as freely as he did. Yet this frankness is the very essence of the autobiography, and that which alone makes it valuable.

So if this little volume is to be of any value to any one, I must be truthful about myself, even though it may hurt my pride.

There is one point, however, where I shall have complete control, and that is as to the length of the book. I will make it short, and will tell the utmost that I can about "Hitting the Dark Trail" in the shortest possible compass.

My objects in writing this little volume have already been partly disclosed, but there are others, prominent among which is a desire to let the other half know, as Jacob Riis would say, how my half (which, in fact, is only a very small fraction) lives; how a person without eyesight fights the battle of life; how he grows the beautiful rose of happiness in the thorny, sterile soil of darkness. But in my case the problem is much more complicated than that, for I have always been at the front in the struggle of life, doing those things which call not only for the very keenest eyesight, but also for what is much more important, minute observation.

I have never for a moment let the fact that I was in a way shut off from the scenes of earth hinder me in entering most fully into their discussion or enjoyment. In fact, I have the very keenest power of visualizing word pictures, or anything that calls for a picture; so where other people ask for a pencil or a brush, with one stroke of the imagination I get the same result.

Another thing which I hope to accomplish in this book is to explain fully to my readers how without eyesight I am able to write nature books. I have always been afraid that my position and methods in this matter would not be understood, and that my books would be considered artificial. I hope to show that on the contrary they are founded and grounded in the very heart of Nature herself, and that without the eyesight that I enjoyed for the first fourteen years of my life, they never could have been written.

Then I also wish to give a helping hand to all the others in the world who struggle in darkness. By describing my own struggle, I wish to make plain the struggle of all those who go through life without the light of day.

At present there is much love and labor lost on both sides of the line, and I hope to make the road more direct, and the way easier for both the sightless and their friends.

And lastly, dear reader, please do not think of me, when you read, as a crippled, groping individual; for if you do, you will be greatly

disappointed, should we ever meet; but think of me as a brother and a friend, whom you would consider no different from yourself if you were to meet him on the street, doing nearly everything either personally or by proxy, that comes to his hand, keenly interested in nature and human nature, and very human himself, bubbling over with a sense of humor and scattering sunshine always—the funny, sunny man, deeply interested in music, the drama, literature, politics, baseball, fishing, and all forms of out-of-door sports—one who fights hard, laughs long and heartily, loves much, appreciates deeply, and lives to his very finger tips—your brother and friend.

CLARENCE HAWKES.

CHAPTER I

BLESSED DAYLIGHT

Childhood, memory, fancy and tradition—The one loved best of all—The old doctor's hand in my affairs—Born for express purpose of seeing, yet blind—Negatives exposed in daylight, but developed in darkness—Grandmother and I befriend the birds and squirrels—Our bird calendar—The boy loved the farm, but not farm work—The boy is taught hunting, fishing, tramping, and camping—Every normal boy is something of a little savage.

THE dividing line between memory and imagination is so vague and mysterious that it is often almost impossible to tell where memory leaves off and imagination begins. This is especially true of one's childhood. When we seek to get away back into the antechamber of memory and recall our very earliest impressions, we are met with this doubt at every turn. Do I remember such a thing, or was it told me by my elders? This is always the query.

So I am inclined to conclude that childhood

is made up of a three-stranded golden cord, and the three strands are memory, fancy and tradition.

Do you remember, dear reader, the days that were as long as an eternity? Days when from the time the great golden orb of day sent its first rays into your chamber window till it rested on the western hilltops was a lifetime? Days with so many little joys and sorrows crowded into them, that they kept one's little heart pounding away for dear life all the time? Days full of wonders and discoveries, beside which the discovery of America fades into insignificance.

Do you remember, in those deliciously happy days, how tall the trees were, and how wide and wonderful the sky? How broad the fields were, and what a sorrowful way the little head had of losing the points of compass? For they were days when one could get lost even in the old orchard in front of the house.

What a jungle the tall grass was in those young days, and what an awful sense of calamity it gave one just to lose sight of one's

house-top for even five seconds! And when that blood-curdling accident of getting lost did befall us, what a yell went up! Then the dearest woman in all the world would come running, herself often as much frightened as we, to see what wild beast had assailed her darling.

Yes, we have all lived them, those wonderful days of childhood. All had fond mothers, all have gotten lost in our own back dooryards, and all blown our bright rainbows with a straw and a dish of soapy water. If the bubbles have all burst and gone the way of our other dreams, what does it matter? They were bright while they lasted, and we were happy then. Children we will always be with our soap bubbles and rainbows, but only once does the perfect bliss come to us, and its memories we cling to as the dearest things in life.

I was born on December sixteenth, 1869, in the town of Goshen, Mass., during a raging blizzard, so the old doctor tells me. So my advent into the world was stormy, and my life has been tempestuous ever since. There is one sad disadvantage in being born in December,

and that is, one is always reckoned a year older than he really is. I am not oversensitive about growing old, but I want to accomplish as much as I possibly can in this life; it has cost me so much pain to get thus far, so I do not want any more years checked up against me than are really mine, when the great things in life are so hard to accomplish.

As I look back upon my life calmly, reflectively, and consider what I was born for, I am perfectly confident that I was born for seeing, for beholding, for discerning.

Yet here I am, only about two-score years old, with what are supposed to be the best working days ahead, with the daylight forever gone from my eyes; but that is not all, for I have groped my way to success for the past thirty years along a path as black as midnight.

Why, then, say that I was born for seeing, for the world of sunlight and shadow, of scudding wind clouds and fleeting earth shadows? Because I cannot conceive of any child who could ever have taken more pleasure in these things than I did. Through the eye I lived.

Each day I devoured the world of beauty and loveliness, and laid me down at night to dream of the wonderful things that I had seen by day; but with each succeeding morning I got up with a new hunger at my heart, an insatiable longing for broad fields and fertile meadows, for wide skies, and deep sequestered woodland.

Water too had a strange fascination for me; even the little trout brook tinkling away down its pebbly bed under the green willows, penciled with many a dancing sunbeam, laughing and gurgling—this little stream was my playfellow. I ran with it through the green meadow, and far into the cool sweet woods. But to catch sight of a sparkling, scintillating woodland lake, seen through the restful green of the forest, just as I did each time we drove to town, nearly made me faint with rapture, while the look of it, the smell of it, and the glint of it would go with me for a week.

It is a daring thought, but I suppose God had made me with an intense love of seeing, an abnormal joy in the out-of-doors, and eyes that

saw everything. Do you not see in that case how the pictures would have gone much deeper into the brain than they otherwise would, so when the great dark came, they would be brighter to the inward eye, and their meaning plainer?

Perhaps I had to do the seeing for a lifetime in those short thirteen and a half years—all the seeing of seventy years crowded into thirteen!

One of the bright and beautiful things in my early childhood was the loving care of my grandmother on my mother's side, Mrs. Josiah Gurney. My own home was at Goshen, Massachusetts, on a little rock-ribbed, sterile farm in the western part of the town, while grandfather and grandmother Gurney lived in Ashfield, an adjoining town made famous by Charles Eliot Norton and George William Curtis, and their Sanderson academy dinners. Grandfather's farm was much more interesting than my own home, because there were many things on the farm that we did not possess, among others a large sugar bush. When I

could pack up and go to grandmother's for a week my cup of happiness was full to overflowing, while grandmother was equally happy, for it was always said that I was her favorite of the grandchildren.

It was through this great-hearted old lady, while I was still a scrap of a boy, not over four or five years old, that I first became acquainted with the birds and squirrels, and took my first lessons in natural history.

Grandmother's heart was so large and so warm, that she not only fed every tramp who ever knocked at her door, but she also made a business of feeding the birds and squirrels, so that the double rows of maples in front of the house, with the orchard across the road, were fairly alive with birds.

From the very early Spring, when the first bluebird perched upon the clothes' post and greeted us with his sweet little "Cheerily, cheerily," we befriended the birds. We not only made bird houses, and spread bounteous feed for our feathered friends through all the season, but we also helped them with their

nest building, and kept tabs on them all through the year.

Our bounty was most needed by our little friends in the Winter, and it was then that we got most pleasure from feeding them. The squirrels were so tame that they would stand on the window ledge eating corn and nuts, while I pressed my face against the window-pane on the other side, and watched breathlessly. Nor were the birds less tame than the squirrels in Winter, for our friendly window seat often accommodated a dozen at a time: juncos, buntings, nuthatches, chickadees, ruby-crested kinglets, pine grosbeaks, even bluejays and crows, and best of all, an occasional shy bob-white.

True, these nature lessons were very simple, but they all partook of the quality of mercy and goodwill for the beautiful things that God had made.

My grandmother was also passionately fond of flowers, and with a small spade I followed in her wake, turning up the sweet-smelling brown mould, and learning reverence in watch-

ing the green things grow. At my own home, however, I had altogether too much of turning over the fresh mould, so that my youthful enthusiasm for the growing things was often dampened, because it seemed to me that weeds grew much faster and more luxuriantly than crops.

My father's health was poor, owing to the fact that he had been one of Uncle Sam's boys in blue in '61, and hardtack had spoiled his digestion. So when I was a mere lad farm tasks much beyond my size and strength often fell to me. I was early introduced to the hoe, the rake, the ax and the shovel, all of which instruments of torture I loved so surpassingly well that I took them down with reluctance in the morning, fearing they might become broken in the course of the day's labor, and hung them up with all alacrity at night, lest they might be worn out with working over hours.

The one consolation in this arduous farm toil was that it carried me each day, in Spring, Summer, Autumn, or Winter, afield. It took

me out into the open, where there was life—life that ran and flew, crept and crawled; life that was continually on the move, and that kept one wondering and guessing all day long.

So from the moment when the skunk cabbage first opened its ugly interesting flower in earliest Spring, until the last fringed gentian faded by the brookside, I had a new lesson before me each day, a new riddle to read, and a new secret to discover.

Thus, while my grandmother and the farm taught me two phases of nature, my father, who was an ardent sportsman, taught me a third, and thus rounded out my knowledge of field and forest in a remarkable degree, for he taught me hunting, boating, trapping and fishing, with all the other woodcraft of the hunter, including camping. At first I merely went along as a spectator, carrying the game-bag and watching with eager eyes the chase; but later on I had a gun and became a real Hiawatha.

In my day none of the modern school of nature books had been written. There were no

Watching for the farm-boy

stories that told of the chase from the standpoint of the hunted, or of their intimate life, so I realized nothing of the barbaric side of such sport. To me it was merely a wild exciting game that called for endurance, nerve, alertness and eternal vigilance. If I had possessed some of Thompson Seton's or Charles G. D. Roberts's books, I might have seen another side of this sport; but I had no such books, and with my training perhaps they might not have deterred me, for a healthy boy is a young savage. In him are the primeval instincts of the race. He harks back more naturally than does man to the days when his ancestors sustained life with a bow and arrow, and with the fishline and spear.

So while I fed the birds and squirrels in Winter, helped them in their nest building in Spring, and was always deeply interested in what they were doing, and sympathized with them in all their struggles, yet, in the Autumn time when the crops were in I often carried the game-bag and watched with savage excitement the day's shooting.

It was through this very sport that the fields and woods that I so much loved were finally lost to me forever. But well it was that I had seen so much before the darkness fell. If I had not stored up myriads of priceless pictures of field and forest under all the changing conditions of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, my life would have been beggared indeed. If I had not seen so much I never could have given other boys the many volumes of intimate wild life that have come from my brain, not laboriously, but as easily as the spring bubbles up from the cliff, or the arbutus opens in Springtime. In this way I have given nature back many-fold more than I ever took from her in the days of my thoughtless youth.

CHAPTER II

CLOUD SHADOWS

I lose a dear friend—The old-time New England parlor —Grandmother goes on a long journey—A child's tragedy—Facing the surgeon's knife—Childish horror at grim discovery—Consolation from a jacque rose—A journey on a couch—Carrying a big stick—Limping back to nature—Boyish games and sports on crutches—Fighting the battle of life again.

JUST four days before my eighth birthday the first cloud crossed the roseate heavens of my childhood, and that was the death of my dear grandmother, the large-hearted woman who had done so much for me. Of course I did not realize the full significance of my loss, or understand in any degree the meaning of death, but still it was a great blow to my childish mind.

I remember as though it was yesterday sitting in the prim parlor of the country farmhouse while the funeral was in progress. Upon

the floor was a bright rag carpet that I had seen grow with my own eyes in grandmother's wonderful loom, for she was one of those old-fashioned women who could make almost anything. As I traced the figure in the bright carpet with my toe, I remembered that she had made all the dyes for the different stripes herself. I had helped her pick the clovertops for the bright reds, the butternut chips for the browns, buttercups and dandelions for yellow and many barks and shrubs for the rest of the gay colors. Upon the walls were wonderful samplers and embroideries from the same skillful hands. In fact, the entire room was a poem, each article of furniture and each skillful decoration singing the praises of grandmother.

Was it really true that she was dead? That she would never again be able to watch with me from the window while the birds and the squirrels fed from our bounty?

I looked about the room at the simple country folks, all in their Sunday best in honor of grandmother; simple, kind-hearted neighbors,

who had all loved grandmother. Then I looked across the room to the tear-stained face of my mother; the dearest, kindest face in the whole world, and she sent to the small boy in the corner, sitting upon an ottoman, a reassuring look. Then I looked at the minister, tall, grave, and rather stern it seemed to me. He was saying something about the Resurrection and the Life. I looked across at my mother again, for there was a lump in my throat about the size of a hen's egg, and I was afraid that I would choke. I could not cry, because none of the men were crying, but that lump grew bigger and bigger.

Now the minister was saying, "In my Father's House are many mansions." I could understand that better, for grandmother was a very religious woman and had told me Bible stories, and explained the New Testament to me, until I was quite a theologian. This was what the minister was trying to say, although he made bad work of it. Grandmother was not in that ugly coffin with its glittering silver handles. She had gone away to one of those

many mansions, where there were more beautiful flowers, and more sweet-singing birds than we had ever enjoyed together.

I saw them lower her coffin into the dark deep hole and heard the melancholy thud of the earth upon the box, when the minister said "Dust to dust and ashes to ashes," but it did not hurt grandmother. In fact nothing could ever hurt her, because she was so good and kind herself; but she had gone away upon a very long journey, and it would be a long time before I should see her again, and I was going to miss her every day of my life.

The first personal affliction of my life, and one that of necessity somewhat subdued my childish ardor and turned my mind towards more serious considerations, occurred when I was nine years old.

This was a misfortune, the consequences of which I have never been able to wholly shake off, although my philosophy of life is always to make the very best of bad conditions.

The pathway to the little district schoolhouse where I learned the three R's lay for a

part of the way through a rough cow pasture, and one evening while jumping down from a stone wall that I had climbed over hundreds of times before, and that I might have climbed a million times more and not come to grief, I sprained my ankle, and went limping sorrowfully home for the rest of the way.

For a few days my ankle did not seem to trouble me, and then one night a very serious inflammation set in, and the doctor was called. He shook his head and looked grave, and kept on coming to see me week after week. Instead of growing better I grew steadily worse, and finally erysipelas developed, and a surgeon was sent for. After he had examined me there was a long consultation of the doctors, and finally my mother, who always took the brunt of everything, and who had scarcely left my bedside for weeks, came in and told me that the doctors were going to take out a bone in my foot, and after that perhaps I would be better. I must be a brave boy and bear the operation like a little man.

I could do anything for mother, so I said I

would, and the two doctors came in armed with knives, saws, and their coats fairly bristling with needles containing what looked to me like shoemaker's thread. I had been moved to a couch beside the window the day before, and I can remember just how the earth and sky looked as I turned my weary gaze from these men, who seemed more like grim phantoms in a bad dream than real flesh and blood men.

It was July 29, 1879, a cool fresh day more like June. The sky was very blue, and miles and miles away; and the clouds on it were very white and fleecy, like cotton batting. The little breeze that blew into the window was very sweet; there was clover scent, with new-mown hay and other fragrant scents on its wings that I did not recognize. If heaven wasn't so far away, and I wasn't so tired, I would like to fly through the window and go to grandmother, then I would not have to suffer such endless pain.

Soon they turned my face back towards the room and put a paper cap, in which was a napkin soaked in ether, over it. They could not

give me very much of the anæsthetic, as I was very weak, having been sick so long, and they were afraid for my heart. So, midway in the operation, and before they even suspected what was coming, I quickly raised myself in bed to see what was going on. As I did so an artery that the surgeon was holding slipped from his hand, and a bright jet of blood shot across the room, spattering the wall paper.

What I had seen in that instant sickened me to my heart's core, and the scar of it is on my soul to this very day.

They had tricked me, had lied to me, for my left leg had been taken off just below the knee.

I needed no urging now to lie down. In a limp sorry little heap I slumped back into my pillows. They might do their worst, now they had done that much; but if I could only get away from them and get to grandmother, then I would not have to be a cripple all through the coming years.

Slowly and very painfully, each day so many weary hours that had to be endured, a minute at a time, I crawled back to health. It was

something, however, to have discovered two or three days after the amputation that the doctors had not really intended to deceive me. They had fully intended to operate on my foot, but had found it in such bad condition that the complete amputation was necessary.

Even in the sick room, far removed from the sweet fields and the pleasant green woods, nature did not wholly forsake me, for a wonderful Jacque rose peeped in at the window to see how it fared with the little sick boy. I took this as a good omen that the fields and woods would again be mine, and often the thin pale little hand stole up to caress the great red rose so full of beauty and splendor. Often I went to sleep with my hand close to the rose. But that at last, like most beautiful things, faded, and its petals fell one by one. Then I had only the memory of it to keep me in the weary hours.

But the little breeze, if more fickle, stayed with me longer, and it often fanned my fevered brow, and told me mysterious things that were doing in the world outside. In its run across the orchard it could not help but imbibe some-

thing of the out-of-doors. So I learned of it that wild strawberries were ripening in the orchard, that the red clover was luxuriant that year, and that the breeze had even been up in the pasture land, for there was just a hint of balsam and spruce in its fragrant breath.

In September, for my sickness had occurred in June and July, my father's family moved to the adjoining town of Ashfield, to live with my grandfather on the old farm that I so much loved. Grandfather had been very lonely since the death of grandmother, so this was a good arrangement all around. The following year, the home in Goshen where I had been born was sold and passed forever from our family. I made the journey to grandfather's place upon a couch placed in a spring wagon, and this was the first time I had been out since my sickness.

To me this was a wonderful trip, but the sun seemed uncommonly bright and hurt my eyes. The fields were so green, and the sounds of nature were so loud, that they made my tired nerves ache, so I was glad when we reached

the vine-covered old farmhouse and I was carried in out of the glare.

A few weeks later a pair of crutches were procured for me and I began life hobbling about upon them. These crutches went with me everywhere I traveled for two years, and I finally exchanged them for a peg leg, a makeshift artificial leg, which, while it was not ornamental, and the wearing of it greatly hurt my pride, yet gave me the free use of my arms, which the crutches had denied me. But whether it was on crutches or the peg leg, erect, or crawling on my hands and knees in some difficult place, I always went into the battle of life with all my energy.

It was during those cripple days, when I was so different from the other children, that I learned much of that hard law of nature, the survival of the fittest. For while most of the children with whom I came in contact were unusually kind to me, yet there was occasionally a boy who would pick upon me, making sport of my deficiency, or even jostling me about. I soon discovered that tact and for-

bearance will carry one only so far. One can smile and laugh things off, and plead and reason up to a certain point, but there are some people who only understand brute force, so upon this class I gave back blow for blow. A crutch is a very handy weapon of defense, and is very easily converted into a club, and I sometimes had to use it as such to keep my place in this fighting world, that can be so kind, and likewise so brutal.

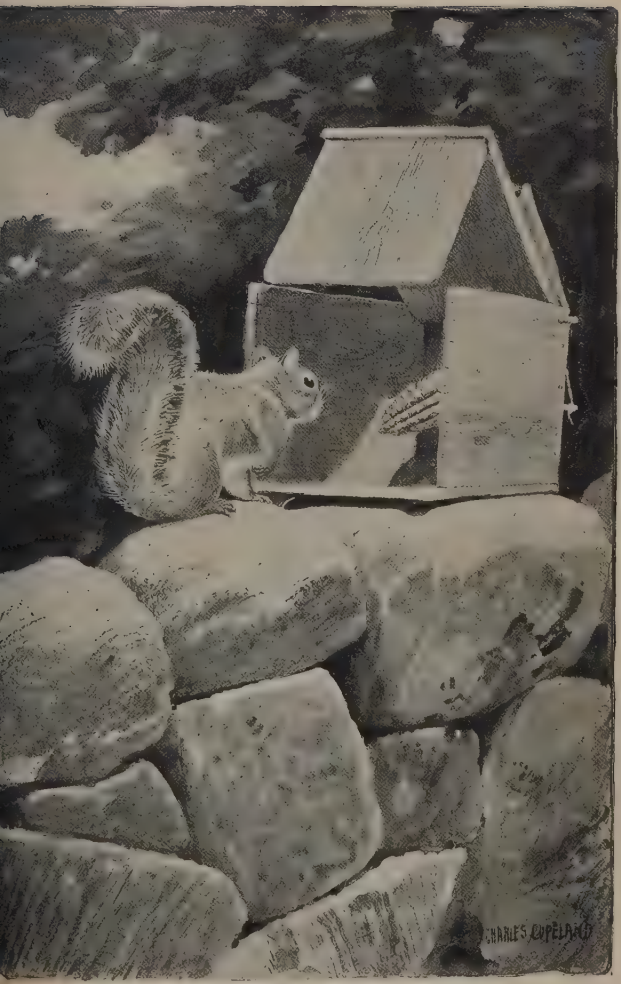
But the heart of youth is naturally strong. The young die hard, and optimism is theirs by reason of their youth, so I soon went back to my childish games and sports on crutches, playing them all as hard, if not quite as successfully, as before. There were some things that I could not do—things that the other boys did—and it was in this connection that I learned one of the hardest lessons of life; as Stevenson says, to renounce if necessary and not be embittered. It took good courage to stand on the coaching line and yell oneself hoarse while the other fellow made your own home run, or to hand the other fellow the

compliment for the high jump; but all those things I managed.

I also learned that by special dexterity, and by using one's head, mere physical strength can be overcome. So if I could go into the box and pitch so cleverly that the other boys could not hit my balls, I did not need to field the position. Then there was always the schoolroom where my out-of-doors defeats, if there were any, could be avenged, and I often punished the brute strength that had been too much for me on the playground, there. The very fact that I was weak in athletics drove me to books, of which I was very fond, so I read omnivorously and studied prodigiously, and thus did two years' work for every year I attended school.

But it must not be imagined that I forsook nature and her ways, for both upon crutches and upon the peg leg I tramped the woods in Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, and became even more intimate with the furred and feathered folks.

There were certain kinds of farm work that



A suspicious house

I could no longer do, so I was set to driving the teams. The hired man would go along to do the loading while I did the driving. This took me into the deep woods in Winter for logs and cordwood, and all through the sugar bush in Springtime. I drove the team for plowing in Spring, took my place upon the hay rake in Summer.

So with farming and tramping the fields and woods in all seasons, and attending the district school when it was in session, I came to my thirteenth year,—to that never-to-be-forgotten day of August 12th, the day of my Waterloo, when the current of my life was forever changed, for better or for worse. That it was for worse as far as my life's happiness and bodily comfort were concerned there can be no question, but that I have accomplished infinitely more because of what befell me on that terrible day I do not doubt.

That was the day that God plunged me into a crucible, and the scars of it will go with me to the grave.

CHAPTER III

THE COMING OF N[illegible]

My new gun—I see my last sunrise—A pleasant picture in the country road—My last glimpse of mother—Hunting dogs eat berries—A premonition—Torrid heat in a dismal swamp—The fatal shot—Darkness and the great void—Coming back to torment—My piteous plight—Marching through the swamp in darkest night—Again in my mother's arms—The journey home—Pain within and gloom without—Testing my eyesight—The verdict—Familiar pictures which I cannot see—I hear nature, but cannot see her face—I shut down my window.

It must not be imagined that after my lameness I gave up any of my outdoor sports and recreations, for I did not. Although it was much harder to pursue them, yet I clung to everything that I had possessed before with the grip of a bulldog, and was enabled to do about everything that I had done before. So the Spring after my misfortune saw me back upon the trout streams fishing, and on the lakes

boating and canoeing, and the Autumn, back in the woods following my father with the game bag.

I even went so far as to tie snowshoes upon my rude wooden leg and lope off across the country through the deep snow following the hounds. Skating I managed in the same manner, so I rounded out the life of a vigorous boy quite well.

About the first of August, 1893, my father bought me a new gun. I had always been allowed to use his guns, but this was my own and I was very proud of it. But my pride and happiness in the new fowling piece were of short duration,—only twelve days, in fact.

Every minute incident of the day of August 12th I can remember, for that was the last day that I ever saw Mother Earth and the faces of those I loved.

The morning was hot and sultry, and I noted as I went to the barn to feed the horses that the cicadas were already singing. It would be a hot day indeed, if they were any prophets.

About eight o'clock I brought the team around to the door. We had started a couple of hours later than usual that morning, as mother was going along. She was to leave us at the woodcock cover, and then drive on to town several miles further, where she was to do some shopping.

The morning drive was uncommonly pleasant, for the road lay through deep woods much of the way. I remember how restful and satisfying was the cool green, and I often think now what a happy choice green was for the foundation color of the universe.

Just after we left the woods we met a flock of sheep which were being driven to pasture. They came up out of a cloud of dust thrown up by their many scurrying feet. It would have made a beautiful painting,—the ribbon of dust-brown road, with the gray cloud above it, and the white flock of sheep scurrying out of it, while on their outskirts hovered two men and a faithful collie. When the flock passed our team the foremost ram bucked, and following his lead, every single sheep in the flock

bucked when it passed us,—a fantastic picture indeed.

At nine o'clock my mother set us down at the cover and went on her way to town little imagining how I would look when she next saw me.

The hunting ground was a fringe of alders and willows that skirted a dimpling little trout stream, and I often stopped as we hunted down stream to snap bits of bark into the brook and watch for the bright flash of the trout as he rose for it, for really I was more interested in fishing than in hunting.

The late blueberries and the early blackberries were both upon the bushes, and several times we stopped to eat. Our setter also ate berries freely, standing on his hind legs to do so. He did not use his paws to strip them off as a bear would have done, but picked them by the mouthful, often getting leaves, and occasionally a pricker, at which he would make up a wry face. I have known quite a few hunting dogs that would eat berries.

Presently as we penetrated farther into the

cover the setter pointed, and a second later the whistling whirr of a woodcock's wings was heard. My father fired at the bird, which did not come out on my side of the cover. To my great astonishment and disgust, at the report I jumped and fell to trembling violently. I had never so much as winked an eyelash at the report of a gun before, but now it seemed to fill me with an unspeakable dread. There was a strange menace in it that I could not understand.

With considerable difficulty I steadied my nerve and went on deeper and deeper into the cover, but very soon it changed its character and became an almost impenetrable black ash swamp. Not quite the usual cover for woodcock, but we knew from their borings that the birds were there, so we kept on.

Each furlong that we penetrated into the swamp increased the difficulty in walking. At last we reached a portion of the swamp where it was almost impossible for me with my lameness to proceed. The swamp-grass was shoulder high. It was intertwined with jewel-weed,

iris, cat-tails, boneset, clematis, and nettles. The bottom also was very bad, for it was spongy and boggy, with soft places where it would not do to step. Often we had to thread our way upon hummocks of grass called niggerheads.

To add to our difficulties the August sun beat down upon us as I have never felt it before or since. We were tormented by an insatiable thirst, and the water all looked swampy and dark, and we did not dare drink it. The extreme heat of midsummer had turned the foliage in this portion of the swamp a sickly yellow green, which color seemed to nauseate me. The nervousness that I had noted when the first gun was fired a mile back seemed to increase with each passing minute. I would jump if a twig snapped, like an old woman who thinks she hears burglars.

I laid it all to the heat, however, but finally told my father that I must sit down to rest for a few minutes, as the combination of heat and bad traveling was too much for me. He said, "All right," and pointed to a tree near by,

where it was shady and more open than the rest of the swamp, so I went and sat down, while he began working a cover near by with the dog.

I had been sitting under the tree with my gun across my knee, watching my father's brown hunting cap, which occasionally showed for a moment where the alder cover was not so dense, and listening to the low tinkle of the little bell on the setter for perhaps five minutes, when the sharp quick whir of a woodcock's wings made me jump nearly out of my skin. I looked in the direction of the cover and saw a woodcock skimming along over some low alder bushes between me and the thicker cover where my father was.

I did not shoot, as to have done so would have sent a charge of shot directly into the cover where father was. I do not know that I could have shot, even if this had not been so, for I seemed to be in the grip of some strange spell; a sorcery was upon me that I could not shake off.

Then came the report of my father's gun, which, as the swamp was overarched with tall

black ashes above the alders, detonated strangely. A blow as from a blast of wind suddenly striking upon me caused me to sink backwards against the tree at my back, while a score of awls, each red hot, it seemed to me from their burning, stuck into my hands, face and breast.

But more than the torment of pain was the fearful fact that in a flash the sun had gone dark, and a deadly sickness like death gripped me.

I put my hand up to my chin where some fluid was trickling down freely, and noted that the tiny stream was warm; blood warm, and then I knew what had happened.

I had just strength enough left to cry out to my father that he had shot me, and then I collapsed and fell back against the tree too faint to speak or move, although perfectly conscious.

I could hear my father calling to me, although he seemed miles away, while he was sopping brook water in my face with his handkerchief, and trying to lift me up.

I did not want to be lifted up, I did not want to be brought back to full consciousness, but preferred to sink down into total oblivion and rest. I was so tired and sick, and I knew it was going to hurt so when I did come back to myself.

Presently I could hear the crows calling away in the deep woods, but it was the tiniest sound I have ever heard; no louder than the humming of a mosquito, but still I knew it for crows.

Then the burning of the score of awls that had been boring into me ever since I sank back against the tree redoubled, the roaring in my ears ceased, and I could hear more plainly, and by degrees I came round. Came back to earth, and the horror that awaited me.

This was the problem that I had to face: I was at the heart of a black ash swamp, two miles from the highway, wounded in thirty places. I could stand the shot that had hit me in the body and limbs, although they had broken two of my fingers; but the thing that staggered me and made me sorry for the time

that I had not lost my life altogether, was the fact that three number-ten bird-shot were sticking in my right eye, and one in my left, and that as far as I knew I was totally blind.

I have often thought since what a queer freak of fortune it was that wounded me in the eyes. If my head had been turned just a trifle, if the shot had scattered just a little differently! If that shot were to be fired over a dozen times, it probably would not have put out both eyes another time. I am not a fatalist, I think, but it must have been ordained that those shot should find my eyes.

For half an hour I lay upon my back while my father continued to sop cold water in my face, and although I had bled a great deal, yet at the end of that time my strength came back to me sufficiently to permit of my standing. Then we began that horrible march of two miles under the blazing August sun, through that dense tangle of swamp growth.

I leaned upon my father's arm, and he guided me as best he could, but even then it was heartbreaking work. Every few rods I

had to lie down, while he went for brook water. With this extreme exertion my hands, face, and breast began to swell, and fever began to quicken my pulse and make me light-headed.

Again and again my father had to implore me, telling me that I would surely die if I did not make an effort to reach the road. Again and again I rose and stumbled on when it seemed to me that I could never rise again. But our longest trials have an end, if we live through them, and if we do not it does not matter. At last, panting and nearly delirious with pain, I fell exhausted by the roadside at the end of the two-mile tramp.

A few minutes later my dear mother drove down the road, returning from town. She came to me, and held me in her arms, with that sympathy which only a mother can give, when the great misfortunes of life overtake us. I lay with my head in her lap for half an hour while she bathed my swollen, bleeding face with brook water; and finally, helped by my father, I climbed into the wagon, and we began the long, tedious journey home.

I lay upon the back seat of the wagon, with my head in my mother's lap, sustained and comforted by her, while the wagon jolted over the five miles of rough road that lay between the scene of the accident and home. I was suffering badly from the shock, and shook as though I had a chill, and vomited freely. But worst of all was the pain, which was excruciating.

Every one of the thirty pellets sticking in my flesh burned as though it had been molten lead, and each wound began swelling freely, until when I reached home my best friend would not have known me.

My sister Alice, eleven years, and my two brothers stood tearfully each side of the doorway while I was led into the house, where I was at once put to bed.

The doctor was hastily sent for, but he was away upon a pleasure outing for the day, and there was no other doctor to be had in the place, so it was evening before medical assistance came to me.

Of course the chief anxiety was over my

eyesight. The other wounds I would get over all right, if blood poisoning did not set in. But as to my eyes, the country doctors could not say. One day they talked hopefully and the next discouragingly, but I imagine that they feared the worst all the time. With three shot in one eye and one in the other it was impossible to keep down the inflammation, although I had ice water cloths on my eyes, which were changed every fifteen minutes for six weeks' time. The pain was fearful, a peculiar, zigzagging pain that was like nothing I have ever experienced since and never want to again.

At last I was allowed to come forth from my bedroom, but with my eyes well protected by a shade. My eyes wept and smarted continually, but the pain was not quite so intense.

I then had perhaps a fifth or a tenth of my normal vision. I could see for perhaps fifty feet in every direction, but through a thick haze, as though the whole earth had been encompassed by a very dense fog.

This pitiful complement of sight was a great comfort to me, until I discovered after a day

or two that this sight was rapidly leaving me. Each morning when I awoke the fog-wall about me had come in a few feet nearer, or it was a little more dense. Anxiously I would test my sight each day, hoping that I was mistaken; but there was no mistake about it.

Every morning when I arose, I would first go to the head of the stairs and test my waning vision on a colored curtain that hung at a window in the hall below. So gradually, so surely, so relentlessly did my vision finally fade, that I was obliged to descend one stair each day to see the curtain in the hall. Finally I counted the stairs and calculated that two weeks from that day I should be totally blind, and this was just what came to me.

One morning late in September I awoke early and threw open my window to get a breath of the out-of-doors air.

It seemed to me now that I was always awake, for sleep would not come to me as in the old days. In fact I have never slept as well since losing my sight. It is nature's way, that when the sun disappears and darkness

falls over the land, all the tired things should close their eyes in sleep. But if there is no day, and no change from day to night, there cannot be that restful change which is the secret of deep sweet sleep.

It must have been six or half past, as I could just feel the feeble rays of the morning sun upon my face. Old Sol must be peeping over the eastern hilltops above the sugar bush. How many times I had watched his great red disk paint these same hilltops crimson! In the air was the sad sweet smell of dying leaves. I knew the maples along the roadside leading to the house must be a blaze of glory, for they had always been so at this time of year, and nature would not change her course though all the world went blind.

I heard a scurrying of little feet, and listened intently. It was a red squirrel scratching down the old butternut tree. I knew as well as I wanted to that he had a nut in his mouth, and I also knew where he was going with it. Sure enough, presently he went scurrying through the leaves at the foot of the tree, and then I

heard him jump upon the wall. Now he was off for the twenty-rod run to the sugarhouse. I knew the identical bucket where that nut would be stored. He had stored them in the same place for three years, and I had placed the bucket in the same spot when I had washed it in the Spring that his housekeeping might not be disturbed.

In a distant cornfield I could hear the jays and the crows calling. Truly they were having a goodly feast. I had driven the team to plow that field, and had helped with the planting. I knew just how it looked now with the hundreds of tent-like shocks of corn, with golden pumpkins gleaming in between. The Indian village of harvest-time, that was what I had always called it.

As the sun warmed up, from near and far came the stir of life. My friends and companions of the old days were all getting busy. The cattle were lowing in the barnyard, and the rooster was flapping his wings on the barpost and making a great noise. I liked to hear his lusty crowing. He seemed so full of life and

well satisfied with the way things were going. Chickens and ducks were yelping and quacking, and all the songbirds that were left were getting their breakfast.

There would come the sudden flutter of swift little wings, and I would try to guess what the bird was and what it was doing. There was a robin pulling worms in the roadway. I had heard him quit when he flew away. A bluebird was uttering his forlorn little song that had sounded so blithe in the Spring from the top of a maple. I could hear a lot of them calling in the orchard and I knew that they were flocking, getting ready for their long flight. There came the sharp snip of a woodpecker. I could imagine him running up the bark of the tree prospecting for worms. All the world was busy, all the world was glad, but myself.

From about my head came the tantalizing fragrance of ripe grapes. I put up my hand and touched a cluster. How fragrant it was, with the amber juices stored up under its purple skin!

All the picture before me I knew intimately.

The broad mowings now freshly green with rowen, the cornfield beyond with its tented acres and golden pumpkins, the sugarbush still further on, which now must be a blaze of scarlet and crimson, of yellow and saffron, and all the other varied tints of Autumn; and above all the jagged ridge of pines and spruces that fringed the distant hilltops. I could see these same hilltops in imagination shot through by the morning sunbeams which were now quite warm.

My world was all there. I could smell and feel it, but could not see it, so far as the eye was concerned. And what did beautiful scenes matter if you could not see them? I might as well be on the planet Mars. I was out of the world, out of life, out of its labors and its enjoyments, out of everything that mattered.

I reached up with my hand and touched my window casement, and then out and touched the roof. Out there was a world as wide as vision, of beautiful hills and valleys, of fields and woods, the wonderful pageant of nature. But my world, the world of touch, to which I

now belonged, was only three or four dark feet in every direction. My radius of action would henceforth be the length of my arm. How pitifully my world had shrunk! For the beautiful world out there, I had been given a black sphere about the size of a haycock.

I knew quite enough of what was before me. I did not need to see or understand more, so I shut down the window and went back to my sleepless pillow, with the heaviest heart I have ever known.

CHAPTER IV

SEARCHING FOR LIGHT

Once more back in the world—A stranger amid familiar scenes—Recognizing flowers and plants by a new sense—The seemingly indispensable sense—Hearing instead of seeing—Empty-handed in a world of treasures—Robbing the eyes of light darkens the soul—Labor is the solace of solitude—Mother helps me to while away the heavy hours—Searching for light—A message from grandmother—Slipping back into darkness—A journey to the city—The shock of a passing express train—Losing the sense of direction—Under the oculist's knife—Two years of torment—The final verdict.

I SHALL never forget the first day that I went forth into the glad old world, the world of sight and sound, of scent and sentiment, without eyesight to behold its wonders and mysteries. My little sister, Alice, three years younger than myself, was my guide. She was nearly heartbroken at the misfortune that had overtaken her brother, and her solicitude and care for me were very comforting. She had

always been my playmate and companion, entering into my boyish sports with more than a girl's usual enthusiasm; but now everything was changed. There could be no more romps as far as I was concerned. Now we must go circumspectly, using care at the rough places.

It seemed so strange to be out in the open fields, with the scenes that I knew so well all about me, and yet so far removed. When a crow flew over, cawing as he went, I turned my face up instinctively. I knew that the dignified black rascal was there, winging his way leisurely through the sky above me, yet it was a mind picture that I saw, and not a vital new sight experience.

When we trod upon some familiar plant, I often recognized it by the scent. Perhaps it was a perfume, or maybe a pungent aroma, yet the restful green of the fronds with their delicate traceries were not now of my world. Occasionally I would get down upon my knees and try to readjust myself to the new condition, try to get in touch with the old plant friend by feeling; but the attempt was usually unsat-

Listening for the little foresters

isfactory, although I have since restored the friendship between myself and plants and flowers, until things are nearly upon the old basis.

My friend, Helen Keller, whom I consider one of the bravest women in the world, in writing of blindness, and of sight versus touch, places the hand above the eye in their order of usefulness. But I think there is a phase of this subject that, with all her keen intuitions, Miss Keller has never been able to grasp; and it is no wonder, having never seen, that she does not understand the surpassing wonder and mystery, and eternal usefulness, of sight.

From the first moment you open your eyes in the morning, until heavy eyelids close over them at night, these wonderful organs are in constant use. They are observing and analyzing the things all about you, for every minute of that time, whether you are conscious of it or not. There is almost no motion you make that is not ordered by sight.

The ears only work when there is sound for them to perceive. The sense of touch is only in action when there is something to feel, the

sense of smell when there is something to smell, but sight is omnipresent, and working continually. Sight is the sense through which we gain nine-tenths of our knowledge, while as for the out-of-doors world of fields and woods, of nature and her ways, sight is about all there is to it.

Was it any wonder that, as I stumbled blindly along the familiar paths where I had been wont to run, hearing familiar sounds all about me, where these sounds had always been associated with wonderful scenes, I felt lost and bewildered? That I felt the world had suddenly slipped from my grasp? That I was in it, but not of it?

I was a stranger in a strange land, yet the land was not strange to me, either. It was my native land. I had been born and bred a child of Nature. There was no sound or scent of hers, no song, or sound of wo that I did not know. Yet in a few awful weeks, the grasp and the mastery of these things had suddenly slipped from me, leaving me empty-handed and empty-hearted, save for a numbing ache

that gripped me by day and night, even making my dreams hideous.

So I contented myself upon that first walk with occasionally stopping to feel a fern or a flower, and listening to the familiar sounds from that lost world that I had known but yesterday, but to-day was a stranger to me.

With the loss of light, I believe there is a corresponding loss of cheer and cheerfulness, which has nothing to do with blindness. Sunbeams are the very quintessence of cheer. A smile is a human sunbeam, and a frown is a human shadow. So with the loss of sunlight and the coming of perpetual gloom I experienced a heaviness of despair that was numbing and chilling, and weighed me down like lead.

It was something that one had to fight day and night, sleeping or waking, to keep back these demons of the dark, these imps, tireless, persistent, o ⁻ipresent, that swarmed about one like mosquitoes over an old swamp, always singing their despair into one's ears, no matter how hard one tried to shut them out.

So the first almost insurmountable obstacle

that I had to overcome was that of regaining my spiritual light, for it seemed to me that, with the blinding of my eyes, my soul had also been blinded. My mirth had been taken from me; the right to laugh, the privilege of smiling, and the right to be glad. I presume that to a person who has never seen, this struggle, this fight for mental and spiritual light does not come. I felt sure that after a time I could get about slowly, and could do a few things, but in the meantime could I keep darkness and despair from smothering me?

Next to the struggle for light, for cheerfulness, and for happiness, which is essential to us all if we would really live, was the struggle for something to do; for no one can be happy without a life's work. After having struggled and fought every inch of the way to that measure of success which I have attained, I can conceive of no more wretched mortals than the idle, indolent rich, without an aim in life, and without a fight, with nothing to accomplish, nothing to attain to.

So to patch up the broken threads of life

and get back into the struggle was my first thought. I went to sawing wood and husking corn for a starter, but these simple tasks were not satisfying. They called for no ingenuity, no brains, no enthusiasm. I might spend a lifetime sawing wood, but it would still be sawing wood. I must do something else, so I began learning to play the organ, my teacher being my dear mother, who neglected her work and invented all sorts of new devices to help and encourage me. My ear and musical taste were not of the best, but I had a brand of patience which could not be beaten, so I began laboriously, assisted by mother's teaching, to learn gospel hymns.

Desperately I sought, at the sawbuck and the corncrib, and at the old organ, to keep off the overwhelming darkness that surrounded me.

I laughed and smiled when my heart was heavy as lead, without a shred of joy in it. I racked my brain for all the funny stories I had ever read or heard, and told them to my folks and to kind neighbors who called to see me,

but it was all in vain. The last spark of real happiness had gone out of me. My life was empty, hollow, a hideous mockery of what it had been.

All this misery I hid from my mother as best I could, for I knew it cut her to the quick to see me wretched. But what boy can hide his hurts away from his mother? That mother love would find them out, no matter how cleverly they were hidden. Often my dear mother would steal up to my bedroom long after the rest of the family were asleep, and put her loving arms about me and fold me to her heart. I would brush away my tears when I heard her coming, and try not to let her know I had been crying.

Finally the dark despair about me got so deep and overwhelming that I gave up the organ and sawing wood, and would sit all day long in a corner with my head in my hands, trying to think it out, searching for light. Now for the first time the full extent of my loss was apparent to me. I saw that my life was probably hopelessly wrecked, and like a drowning

person I was looking for some straw to cling to.

It was just about this time that a very peculiar experience came to me, something that was the nearest to the supernatural of anything I have ever experienced. I was sitting at the organ one evening in the Winter twilight, leaning forward with my head in my hand, too weary and heartsick to play. It was snowing outside, for I could hear the slight rattle of sleet against the windowpane. Inside the fire was crackling merrily; a cheerful sound, but it held no mirth for me. I was wondering how long I could go on aching, and aching, without any joy in my heart. Why had it all happened, and after all was it not a horrible dream, from which I would presently awake and find the sun shining brightly, and the birds singing? Everything seemed like a nightmare in those days, for light alone gives reality to life. I had pinched my arms so often to find out if I was awake, that they were sore and probably black and blue.

Presently, as I sat with bowed head, I felt

a wonderful hallowed something stealing down upon me. It was like a benediction, as though a great wave of joy, happiness and peace had suddenly enfolded me. There was something familiar about it all, too, and yet it was more wonderful than anything I had ever known before. My heart became light and sang for joy. I lifted up my head and threw back my shoulders, and felt equal to anything.

All the time I was reaching out for something or some one whom I knew as well as my own mother, and who was very dear to me. Then a great thought came to me, one that I have cherished ever since. It was my grandmother who stood over me! She had seen my great distress and had come down from heaven to comfort me. I felt as sure of it as I would had it been my own mother who had come into the room and put her hand upon my head. It was certainly grandmother, who had loved me so deeply. My silent cry for help had reached her, and she had come swiftly and surely to my aid.

I rose from the organ a new being, and went

back to life with a zest. Mother and the rest of my family were astonished at my sudden resilience, and did not know what had happened to me.

I felt instinctively that my help had been from heaven, so I turned to reading the Bible, my grandfather acting as reader. For a few months, by means of this new-found joy, and by constantly refreshing myself with the most hopeful Bible stories and promises, I sustained myself. But the heart of youth wants very present joys. It is not enough for a child to think he may find heaven at some distant time. He wants heaven now, or rather he wants earth,—earth and the fullness thereof,—the joys of living and loving, of striving and accomplishing.

So, while this spiritual help upheld me for a while, yet it was not for long, for soon the old aches were knocking at my heart, and soon the demons of darkness again assailed me from every side. Again I was plunged into a gloom darker than the darkness of Egypt.

About this time, when I had reached the very

depths of despair, the country doctor who had attended me when I was shot called to see me, and told my parents that he thought I ought to be taken to the city to consult with some great oculist concerning my eyes. Something might possibly be done to regain a little of my vision. At this suggestion my spirits rose again, and from then on for the next two years I alternated between hope and despair, according to how the doctors happened to talk at the time.

This was in the Winter, and in the Spring following I got ready and went with my mother, who always took all the hard things on herself, to Boston to the eye-and-ear infirmary, to see what the doctors could do. I had always been a quiet country lad, and had never traveled. In fact, I had never ridden on the steam cars, so it was a great change to me to be whirled away to the city.

At this time I was in a very nervous state, not having gotten adjusted to the new conditions. All sounds seemed much louder than they had formerly been. The auditory nerves

were keyed to a high pitch, and if I heard a sudden sharp noise it would make me jump nearly out of my skin. So all the way to Boston, whenever the conductor came in and shouted out the station, although I knew he was coming, I would jump.

Another thing that greatly annoyed me was the loss of my sense of direction. When I had possessed eyesight I had been remarkable for that sense which the scientist calls orientation. I could plunge into the deepest forest and tramp for hours without ever losing the direction of home; but the first time I went aboard a train I lost this comforting sense entirely. To my great astonishment the train started backwards, and backed and backed for hours until we should have been in central New York, according to my calculations; but the conductor came in and cried out Boston.

At the first glance at my eyes the doctors said the case was a very serious one, and finally nearly a dozen of the best oculists at the Hub were puzzling over the case. After a consultation that lasted for a part of two days, they

said that it would hardly pay to operate, as there was but one chance in a hundred of gaining any appreciable vision, while I might lose the sense of light which I then possessed.

My father was telegraphed the decision, and we considered for two wretched days longer, and then decided to try even that desperate chance. Finally, when nearly a week had been consumed, I went to the infirmary for the first and worst of the many operations that I underwent battling for my vision. I went to the operating room like a soldier, so it seems to me now as I look back upon the experience from a safe distance, and with much more courage than I could put into any such enterprise now.

The doctor, a kindly, bluff old man, told me that I was to undergo a very severe operation, and that they could give me no anæsthetic, as the entire object of the operation would be to hurt the eye as much as possible in hopes of starting up its action, which had become very sluggish. He said he was sorry that I could have no anæsthetic, but it could not be helped.

I said if he would give me back my eyesight he might skin me alive, and he slapped me on the back and said, "Good stuff, Sonny."

I was then strapped to a table, my hands were tied, and a rubber blanket was placed under my head. Then an ugly little machine for holding the eye still was brought into play. As nearly as I could make out it had six hooks placed at regular intervals, and all converging towards a center. This machine was sprung open, both the upper and under eyelids were rolled back, and then these six hooks were brought together, grappling the eye at the six points where the muscles control it. When it was finally in place, with the six points gripping my eye, I thought the worst was over; but the torment had just begun.

"Now," said the doctor, when everything was in readiness, "if you ever want to see again, don't stir your eye a hundredth part of an inch. It depends as much on you as on me."

My nerve was not of the best by that time, for I had been in the operating room for half an hour listening to the groans of two patients

who had been operated on before me, but I promised.

We all know how it hurts to get a bit of dust or a cinder into the eye, but I had to hold perfectly still while a lancet was slowly thrust into the eyeball. Every nerve in my body quivered, and tears ran down my cheeks like rain. Finally the incision in the eyeball had been made. Then a small pair of tweezers was inserted in the cut to draw forth the coagulated lymph, and this process was repeated until I was so faint that they had to stop. Finally the eye was bandaged up, and left to rest and await results. This was the most severe of half a dozen operations that I ultimately underwent.

For nearly two years I was on this rack of torment. I would go to the city with my mother, and the doctors would operate and then wait for a few weeks to see the effect of the operation, and then operate again. After a while they would send me home to rest for a couple of months.

Six different trips I made to the city. Each time I was so fagged out at the end of the or-

deal that I was glad to escape home; but finally I would get up courage again, and determine to make another struggle for vision. At last, when a thousand dollars had been spent, and I had undergone six operations, the doctors told me that it was useless to try further, and what they had feared from the first had come true. I was no nearer seeing than I had been the first time I came to the city. My case was hopeless, and I would have to make up my mind to it.

I had undergone such torment and been so long on the rack, that when the doctors told me this I was for that day the happiest boy in America, for I had escaped their instruments of torture and was to be left alone for a while. I did not then remember my old horror of being blind for the rest of my life, but in a day or two it came back to me, and I was again back in the old rut, counting the hours of each day, and wondering how I could ever manage to live out the weeks ahead.

When we were leaving the infirmary the doctor had said to my mother: "There is one thing you can do with him; send him to Perkins

Institution." I did not know what or where that place might be, and did not care, but it was a very helpful suggestion, and one that ultimately showed me the way out of darkness into light.

CHAPTER V

THE DAWN OF HOPE

I come within reach of the William Cullen Bryant library—I prepare to enter Perkins Institute—Saying good-bye to my friends and the country—The Babel of the great city—I meet a gruff professor—A veritable beehive—Vacation reminiscences—Getting acquainted with the apparatus for teaching and methods—Cuba is rediscovered—Work for work's sake—Four happy years—Financial independence, the watchword of the sightless—I try music, but finally give it up—A story-teller in the chair-caning shop—Reading the classics in vacation—Public readings at the school by Julia Ward Howe—I write my first poems—Editor of the school paper—Selling my first story—Post-graduate work—A little about Helen Keller—Helen learns to speak—Ill of the grippe and return home—The channel of my life is changed.

In the Spring of 1885 my parents sold the old farm of my grandfather in Ashfield, where I had spent so many happy days as a child, and where grandmother and I had fed the birds and the squirrels, and we moved to the village

of Cummington, Mass., the birthplace of the poet, William Cullen Bryant. This move, because of the fact that the poet had given the town of his nativity a wonderful library, meant a great deal to me, although I did not realize it at the time.

All through that Summer I lived in the same hopeless condition, not knowing or caring what was ahead, for I felt sure that there could be nothing but heartache and heavy despair. Preparations were going forward to send me to Perkins Institute, but even that did not interest me, for my life star had set, or so it seemed to me, and there was nothing to do but to wait as best I could for the end.

At that time I had a morbid feeling that only death could end my misery. I often thought of it, and wondered if my people would miss me, or if they would say that I was better off out of the world and they were glad I was gone. The year before my accident I had read a pathetic story called "Jericho Jim," by Rose Terry Cook. In this story, which made a vivid impression on my young imagination, Jim had

crawled away into a dark corner of the barn and died of a broken heart. When I should once be away from my mother, down at the school for the blind, which I felt surely held nothing good for me, I would crawl away into some dark corner (all corners were dark now) and die of a broken heart. Then if they would only miss me just a little at home, and not say I was better off, everything would be all right.

Such were the spirit and the hopes with which I started for Boston. When we remember the high hopes of the seeing boy or girl who goes away to school it can well be imagined to what a low ebb my spirit had fallen. It was not convenient for either of my parents to go with me, so a neighbor, a kindly person with a nasal twang, accompanied me.

I can remember as well as though it were yesterday the morning when the old stage rattled up to the door, and my trunk was put on the rack behind, and I said good-bye to my people. My mother and sister Alice cried, and my two younger brothers were rather depressed, while as for me I certainly thought

it was the last time I should see them, for was I not fully determined to die of a broken heart and come back in a pine box? But kind Providence had better things in store for me.

There had been a light frost that morning, and the air was clear, crisp, and full of ozone. The countryside was an orchestra of well-remembered Autumn sounds,—the calling of the crows, the squalling of the jays, the "quitting" of the robins as they flew hither and thither, flocking for the long flight southward. As the old stage coach rumbled along the country road, every rod of which was familiar to me, I conjured up a picture of each familiar scene, and said good-bye to them all,—the woodland, the meadows, the pasture land, and all the rest of the dear countryside that I loved.

For a wonder I made the trip to Boston without backing more than half the way, which showed that I was getting somewhat acclimated to darkness. But in the street cars I was constantly on tenter hooks, for all the deadly sounds, such as the rumbling of dray wheels and the thunder of trains, always

seemed coming directly at me; but just at the opportune moment the sound would veer off and we would escape being ground to atoms. Even now, and I have been schooling my nerves for thirty years, to stand upon a platform while a night express goes thundering by within a few feet gives me an eerie sensation. As a general rule, sight gives confidence, and a lack of it timidity.

At the North Station in Boston we saw several other Perkins pupils, who were returning to the school after the Summer vacation. Captain John Wright, the physical instructor at Perkins, was escorting them over to South Boston, and I at once set him down as the gruffest old chap I had ever seen, although later on, when I got acquainted with him, I discovered that this was merely a manner that he put on, probably to keep the boys in subjection.

When we went up the long flight of steps leading from Broadway, South Boston, to the Institute, I did not experience even a flutter of curiosity as to what was ahead of me inside the

portal. But I was rather astonished to find everything hurry and bustle inside, for the boys were racing up and downstairs and along the corridors at a pace that fairly took my breath away. I had imagined that the Institution would be a sort of home or asylum where we would wear away the weary hours in indolent idleness and be waited on by attendants, but instead I had come into a hive of bees at swarming time, judging from the humming and buzzing about me.

It was "Hello Bill," "How are you, Tom?" and "That you, Jack? Did you have a pleasant vacation?" "I did so and so, what did you do?" The exuberance and high spirits surprised me not a little, but these boys had not been through what I had. I could never feel like that.

Soon the kind neighbor who had come down with me left, and I felt that the last tie that bound me to home and friends had been severed. I was then put into the hands of one of the older pupils, who showed me about the school. We went through the many school-

The old Perkins Institute, where Mr. Hawkes studied for five years

rooms, and he showed me a raised print book about the size of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary. Eagerly I passed my hand over the rough surface of the page. Perhaps I could get back to books through this medium, and that would certainly be a comfort. But the page felt like a hetchel, and was as meaningless as an unplaned board.

Then he showed me a type slate for doing examples in arithmetic and algebra, with different characters on either end of the type. The type were set up in cells, and then the computation was made by touch; but this too looked hopeless.

Finally he led me over to a dissected map of the United States. This map was made like a Chinese puzzle, with each state sawed out of half-inch board, and the whole was set up in an indented outline of the United States. Listlessly my hands wandered over the map; this too was going to be another disappointment. When I had about given up looking, my hand slid down into the Caribbean Sea, or just above it, where lies the Pearl of the

Antilles. Then my hand strayed up and closed over that unfortunate island.

A flash of intelligence like lightning shot through my brain. Eagerly, with trembling fingers, I felt the familiar outline from end to end. I could hardly believe my fingers, but it was all there, the outline that I knew so well from the seeing map.

"I have found Cuba. It's Cuba!" I fairly shouted.

Indeed I had found Cuba, and much besides.

Perhaps this was the greatest discovery that I ever made, for I had found myself,—myself, so long lost in the hopeless jungle of darkness and despair.

This discovery that I was once more in connection with the world, and that I could do things with my fingers which I had formerly done through eyesight, set my face in the right direction, and after that I was always interested in what they showed me about the school, and willing to do my very best to get the utmost out of their methods. For the next four

years I worked as few students have ever worked at any seeing school.

In a couple of weeks' time I had mastered braille and could read and write it readily. This is a system of writing through punching dots in paper by means of a stiletto, the paper having been placed in a braille slate for the purpose. The rapidity with which I learned braille may serve as a sample of the manner in which I went at my work. I had been so long idle, that work was now play to me, and the days were not long enough in which to study and work. I had always been a bookish boy, and I now discovered that there was a craving for knowledge inside me that would not let me rest as long as I could get knowledge through my finger tips.

In this wonderful school for the blind, which was founded by Dr. Samuel G. Howe, the philanthropist, over eighty years ago, many things besides the usual school studies are taught; for it is here that the pupil has to gain the knowledge or handicraft with which he expects to support himself when he shall go

out into the world,—and all expect to support themselves. Dependence upon the bounty of friends or the town is the worst bugaboo of the blind. They like to fight the battle of life without outside aid, and to take their places in the seeing world, man to man.

So in addition to the regular academic course I took music, as did many of the pupils. My ear and natural musical gifts were not of the first order, but I had patience. It was no hardship to sit at a piano and practice a difficult passage for three or four hours on a stretch, going over and over a half dozen bars, so I partly made up by diligence what I lacked in natural musical temperament. But I was never a success as a musician, and I soon saw that music could not be my life work. For the same reason piano tuning, which I also partly learned, was not suited to my ability, so that I gave that up as well.

Chaircaning and the other branches of industrial work interested me only temporarily. In the chaircaning room, however, I spent many pleasant hours working and telling sto-

The new Perkins Institute at Watertown, Mass.

ries to the other boys who were interested in such things. Half a dozen congenial spirits would always gather in my corner of the room, and while our fingers flew I told stories. Everything of Dickens was retold in simple form to suit my audience. Most of Scott was served up in the same manner. *Robinson Crusoe* and the *Swiss Family Robinson* did not have to be simplified, nor did the *Arabian Nights,* nor a grist of fairy stories which I had read.

I told stories in this manner two or three hours a day for nine months, and finally ran out, and had to make up yarns for the occasion. These were usually of hunting, or Indians, and pleased the boys better than Dickens or Scott.

About the second year of my life at Perkins Institute I began to dream dreams, and to experience those strange longings and aspirations in my inner being which the reader has no doubt also experienced. We attended many concerts and lectures of the finest type, and these, coupled with the reading of the classics which I did at home in vacation time,

started the love of beauty and truth burning in my soul.

Julia Ward Howe, the widow of Samuel G. Howe, came often to the school from her home in the city and read to us, both from her own fine poems, and from the classics. Her gifted daughter, Julia Romana Anagnos, the wife of Michael Anagnos, Superintendent of the school, read us "The Princess," "In Memoriam," and many other selections from the English poets.

So finally I found myself drifting away from music and the industrial work of the school and wishing with all the mad intensity of youth that I might be a writer; that I might produce some lines full of beauty and tenderness like those I read.

My mother at this time was an invalid and she read to me many times as much in the Summer vacation as I heard at school during the rest of the year. She was a poet herself with a fine appreciation of the best things in literature, both English and translations, so we soon went far afield.

One Summer we spent entirely reading the Italian poets Dante, Tasso and Petrarch. We read and reread them until we were as familiar with the lines of the "Divine Comedy" as we were with the "Barefoot Boy." "The Sonnets to Laura" were as familiar as was the "Psalm of Life," and "Jerusalem Delivered" was as much ours as was "Paradise Lost."

So I began to long to write. Music might be all right for the pupils who had special musical gifts, and did not have this awful burning desire to write. So I began neglecting my music and devoting my time surreptitiously to writing. I took my braille slate to the music room and wrote when I should have been practicing Chopin or Bach. I also took it to bed with me and wrote when I should have been sleeping.

Soon I had gained a reputation as the literary pupil of the school. Special essays and stories for public occasions often fell to me. I became editor of the school paper, and in the debating club earned the name of Demosthenes.

My first poems found their way into our little school paper called *"The Echo."* This paper was printed both in braille, for the use of the pupils, and in typewriting for the edification of the teachers. Much of the typewritten copy I made nights in bed after the silence bell had struck. I had a small typewriter which I covered up with the bedclothes and could manipulate nicely.

Several times Captain Wright, the vigilance man, came into my room and walked over to my bed, to discover where that strange clicking came from, but I was always sleeping soundly when he appeared and the typewriter was hidden beneath the bedclothes, so my secret was never discovered.

I also began, encouraged by my mother, trying some of my first crude poems on the country newspapers. This was during my Summer vacations, and to my great delight several were printed. I likewise tried my hand at story writing and sold my first story to my good friend, Mr. Charles Warner, for use in a pictorial book, called *Picturesque Hamp-*

shire. When I received a check for five dollars for this story my cup of happiness was full.

After four years of hard work I graduated from Perkins Institute as valedictorian of my class. This was in 1890, and the following year I returned to the school for post-graduate work.

I also began studying elocution with teachers from the Emerson School in Boston, with an idea of fitting myself for public speaking, and in addition began reading law, and attending court each day in Boston in order that I might acquaint myself with court procedure, but my heart was never in this work. It seemed sordid and vulgar compared with my higher dreams of literature. I had to force myself to this work, and it was always irksome to me, but it was not destined that I should be a lawyer.

I must not leave the subject of Perkins Institute without saying something of my friend and fellow struggler, Helen Keller. She came to the school during my second year, and news

of the coming of the little deaf, dumb, and blind girl from Georgia spread among us like wildfire. Laura Bridgman we had always been interested in, and birthday parties and receptions were often held in her honor. These parties always attracted to us such men as Edward Everett Hale, Bishop Phillips Brooks, James Freeman Clarke, and other scholars and preachers. But this young new life coming into our midst was a much more engrossing thought. She had come to be one of us, and we would be allowed to watch her struggle for light and happiness daily.

I do not know why, but the thought of this little girl in the great dark and the vast silence gripped my imagination with a clutch like steel, and her life was a great source of inspiration to me. If she could make good, how much more ought the rest of us, who had only a small part of her handicap!

One of our own graduates, Miss Annie Mansfield Sullivan, was given the tremendous task of unlocking the doors of darkness and silence, and that made the undertaking even

more interesting to us. Every few months Mr. Anagnos would give a long report in chapel of her progress, so we were kept in close touch with what went on. At the end of the first year Mr. Anagnos reported that great progress had been made, and that Miss Sullivan was to rank with Dr. Howe, who had first taught Laura Bridgman, as a teacher of deaf blind mutes.

At all the public functions of the school Helen was present, and we heard much of her triumphs one by one, as she made rapid strides towards knowledge and happiness. But happiness had always been hers, for it was said that when she first came to the school she was as frolicsome and playful and full of high spirits as a kitten.

I was walking on the piazza one morning in early Spring, longing for a whiff of the fields and meadows at home, when one of the teachers came out, bringing a copy of the Boston *Journal,* and her manner was greatly excited. Helen Keller had been taught to speak. There was a column and a half about it in the *Jour-*

nal, and most eagerly we devoured the wonderful news. The feat had been accomplished at the Horace Mann school for deaf mutes in Boston. Wonder of wonders! Her teacher had hoped to keep the fact a secret and surprise Helen's people with the glad tidings when they should go South for the Summer vacation, but the ubiquitous newspaper man had been too much for them, and here the secret was in type where all the world might read.

I have promised to make this book short, yet I must include two of Helen's optimistic letters, which she wrote me several years later:

CAMBRIDGE, May 7, 1906.

MY DEAR MR. HAWKES:

Your very kind letter and the fragrant blossoms of hope brought me a great deal of pleasure and I thank you sincerely for your thoughtfulness. I love May flowers as I love no other children of the wild. Their sweetness seems one with the thrill of life, and the upspringing joy that never deserts me.

I have not been ill since February. I feel very well these beautiful Spring days. Your message found me sitting in the sun, breathing deep the pure morning air

that came through the open window, "and its pureness is its beauty."

I go out of doors as much as possible and grow stronger every day. From first to last the newspapers have exaggerated my ill health and made a good story out of nothing. The fact is I got so tired last Winter I needed complete quiet for some weeks, and then my friends urged me not to do much, but pass the time pleasantly, until I felt quite strong again. I found it very tiresome to retire myself, but now I am at liberty and eager for the race. It is not nearly half run, I think, and I hope I shall go farther than before without stopping to breathe. The undone beckons me on and on endlessly.

Please remember me kindly to Mrs. Hawkes. I have often thought with pleasure of the day I saw you both in Cambridge. With cordial greetings I am,

Sincerely your friend,

HELEN KELLER.

CAMBRIDGE, May 15, 1908.

MY DEAR MR. HAWKES:

I wish I could write the pleasure it gives me to have your kind letter and to possess the books you sent me. I have not yet had time to read any of your works, except the verses you so kindly copied for me. In college I can never do half the pleasant things that I would like to. But my teacher has promised that this Summer, when we have more leisure, she will read the books to me. She says she thinks that "The Mountain to the Pine" is one of the most beautiful sonnets writ-

ten in many a day. I thought of you last week. I was at Northampton and knew you were not far off, but I had only two days to spend with my friends at Smith College, so it was not possible for us to meet then. I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed being there, among the hills and brooks and groves, away from books and articles and the many small worries that pursue me from one end of the college year to the other. The apple trees were most beautiful and my heart ran riot with delight as I drank in the fragrant air.

We expect to spend the Summer in a little cottage at Wrentham, a lovely country place not far from Boston. The cottage is right on the edge of a beautiful lake, and I have a little boat there which I can row myself, so there will be much to enjoy.

I am sure I should enjoy a visit to Hadley. It is one of the many pleasures I have to look forward to.

With kindest regards and hope that we may meet again soon, I am sincerely your friend,

HELEN KELLER.

Here is Helen's favorite of all my sonnets. She afterward quoted it in the *Century Magazine,* with a glowing eulogy of the simple little poem, and since Mr. Stedman included the sonnet in his *American Anthology,* Miss Keller's critical judgment has been seconded by the best authority.

THE MOUNTAIN TO THE PINE

Thou tall majestic monarch of the wood,
That standest where no wild vine dares to creep,
Men call thee old, and say that thou hast stood
A century upon my rugged steep.
Yet unto me, thy life is but a day,
When I recall the things that I have seen,
The forest monarchs that have passed away
Upon the spot where first I saw thy green.
For I am older than the age of man,
Of all the living things that crawl or creep,
Or birds of air, or creatures of the deep;
I was the first dim outline of God's plan;
Only the waters of the restless sea,
And the infinite stars in heaven, are old to me.

In the Spring of 1890, I fell ill of the grippe, and partly because I was much overworked, was unable to recover quickly. I was finally invalided home early in that Spring, and circumstances shaped themselves so that I never returned, although I had hoped to do so in the Autumn, and to take up again the study of law and oratory, in which I was making good progress.

CHAPTER VI

THE LITERARY STRUGGLE

J. Stuart Mill read by a boy eight years old—Writing poems for local newspapers, including the Springfield *Republican*—I give my first lecture upon the American poets—Lecturing and writing poems for a living—I move to Hadley, Massachusetts, and become acquainted with my future wife—Writing poems for popular magazines—My three P's, patience, perseverance and pluck—Three years of lecturing in country towns—Peril of traveling alone under modern conditions—Charles Eliot Norton's opinion of this commercial age, and my likelihood of success with poetry—In the literary struggle, never say die—My most popular poems—I publish my first book—Five volumes of poems and what they netted me—My best helper and friend passes on.

I HAD been greatly overworked when the grippe seized me, and as usual Dame Nature took full toll for my long abuse of her bounty. For months I was barely able to drag about, but I studied and read constantly, and all

the time kept up a terrific thinking when not too weary.

Being denied the broader activities of the great city, I at once entered with what strength and ambition I could muster into the social and literary activity of the little town of Cummington, where my parents then lived. I was soon made president of a temperance society, and in that capacity went to several neighboring towns making speeches and representing the local society.

Each day, all through the Spring and Summer, when it was fair, myself and my youngest brother, Ernest, whom I always called the Kid, would go down into the meadow, back of our house, where a branch of the Westfield river wound its leisurely way. We always carried an armful of books, and there under a large chestnut tree, where it was cool and sweet and where I could hear the running water, we devoured small libraries upon different subjects.

The Kid, who was only seven or eight years old, was a fine scholar, and a good reader, so

by turning story-teller myself every few pages, and sandwiching in fairy stories, *Arabian Nights,* and all the boys' books I had ever read, together with much adult reading, made over and reduced to the terms of a small boy's understanding, we worried through much heavy reading. I remember among other things we read seven huge political economies. The arduousness of this reading for the small boy, as well as myself, can well be imagined when I tell you that one of these works upon political economy was J. Stuart Mill's prodigious work of two volumes containing fourteen hundred pages. We often read for half a day at a time, while I told twenty or thirty stories to get the kid to keep at the dull books.

We also took fishing tackle along, and when we were tired of reading would fish or go in swimming. I was a good swimmer and greatly enjoyed both swimming and fishing, so we would make out a very full half day.

It must not be imagined, however, that I let the reading of political economy in any degree dampen my ardor for the poets, for this

heavy reading was merely supplementary to my thoughts of law and politics. I have always been deeply interested in politics; not only those of my own country, for which I have a passionate patriotism, but also those of the world. Ever since I was large enough to hold up a newspaper I have devoured all the daily papers I could lay hands on. I consider the press the very best teacher of contemporary history that one can have, provided one reads discriminately. So merely by reading the papers and remembering everything that is important, I have a very accurate and minute history of the world's great events for the past thirty-five years. Not only do I remember all the wars, their battles and their causes, but also all the political changes, and the great men who have figured in each. There is occasionally a man so narrow-minded that he considers the reading of newspapers a detriment, but it seems to me that such a man has passed by a gold mine which he did not even know existed.

All through the Summer of 1891, while I

was plugging away at economics I was also reading the poets, and dreaming dreams. When the fret and struggle of life depressed and crushed me I always turned to the poets for strength and inspiration. Nearly every day of this Summer I also wrote verses, some of which were good enough to be printed in so literary a newspaper as the Springfield *Republican*. And being interested in the lives of the poets as well as their work, I began writing my first lecture, which I finally called "An Hour with the American Poets."

When Autumn came around, and the corn was shocked and the bloom was on the pumpkins, and it was again time for me to turn my face cityward and resume my studies, I found that the effects of the grippe had not fully left me, so I delayed going from week to week. But I could not remain idle, as it was not in my nature.

Partly for diversion, and partly for the few dollars that I received for it, I began giving my lecture on the American poets in the country towns about Cummington. I drove from

town to town in a hired team. Sometimes this was driven by my sister Alice, who was always deeply interested in my work, and sometimes by my good brother Enos, who was always helpful, but four or five years later the Kid took his place as traveling companion on many lecture trips. My success from an artistic standpoint with these lectures was quite pronounced, as I received fine notices from the editors and literary people who chanced to hear me, but the pecuniary rewards were at first small. I found, however, that if I traveled fast and far enough, and did not mind hardship, I could make a living,—not a luxurious one, but still a livelihood.

So I finally gave up the idea of returning to Boston for the study of law, redoubled my efforts with verse writing, and gave more lectures on the American poets each year. Likewise, with more ambition than common sense, I wrote a lecture on the civil war, which I gave one season.

In the Spring of 1892, my parents removed to Hadley, Mass., and I transferred my liter-

ary efforts to that historical old town, which has since been the scene of my literary activities. The move to Hadley affected my life in several ways, for it was there that I made the acquaintance of the girl who seven years later became my helpmate and life companion, and also first met my friend, Elbridge Kingsley, the celebrated painter-engraver, and several other writers who lived in the Connecticut valley,—prominent among whom was Charles Goodrich Whiting, the literary and art editor of the Springfield *Republican*. Mr. Whiting had printed some of my first poems and encouraged me to write more, and his friendship was for several years one of my chief stimuli to literary endeavor.

But it was not until 1893 that I seriously set about making literature my life work, and attempted the storming of that citadel known as the editor's sanctum. I had read that poets starved in garrets, and that Milton sold "Paradise Lost" for ten pounds, and that Oliver Goldsmith went to bed and pawned his clothes that he might publish the "Deserted Village,"

but the heart of youth is buoyant. We always think that we can succeed and make a living where the other fellow has starved, so nothing daunted by these scareheads, I threw my whole fortune, which then was merely my time and my heart's best blood, into the almost hopeless task of making a living by writing poems and giving literary lectures. There was at least one consolation, even if I did starve: this was the thing I wanted to do, and there was a world of satisfaction in that.

I do not think anyone ever worked harder than I did in the next two or three years, or received more hard knocks. But hard knocks seemed to toughen me, and my whole success, such as it is, has been built up on a series of small failures, so I kept right on, no matter what befell.

It must not be imagined for a moment that any small fraction of my literary success, either as a lecturer or as a writer, ever came easy. Some literary people stumble on to success and become famous in a few months, or even weeks, but my success has been gained by

heartbreaking toil, through what I call my three P's, patience, perseverance, and pluck.

Some people are lucky, and fate or the stars seem to send good fortune to them, but I cannot remember ever having had what might be called a stroke of good fortune in my whole life. Every inch of the way I have fought. No miner delving for gold in the frozen Arctic, with the thermometer at sixty below zero, and the earth frozen for God only knows how far down, has ever sweated and struggled more than I. No soldier upon the weary march, loaded down by his heavy knapsack and gun, with the mud halfway to his knees, has ever had to fight as I have. My success, what little I have gained, has been literally dug out of the solid rock of adversity, with naked, bleeding fingers.

To meet my first lecture engagement I drove ten miles in an open carriage in one of the worst sleet and rain storms that I ever experienced, only to find that the hall was closed and the lecture off for that night.

For my second engagement I drove eight

miles in a blinding snowstorm to find thirteen people waiting to hear me. I received a dollar and sixty-five cents for this lecture, and spent five for advertising and team hire, while the janitor took pity on me and gave me the hall hire.

For the first two or three years of my lecturing experience I stuck almost entirely to the country towns, partly through having underestimated the quality of my lectures, and partly because I wished to perfect myself as a public speaker by practicing on the simple country people. Imagine my astonishment when I finally ventured into the cities to find that I had wasted the better part of that time, as the educated city people were much more appreciative of my efforts, and the pecuniary rewards were greater. However, I hope to avenge myself upon fate for this hard apprenticeship by writing a humorous book of my experiences of those three arduous years.

During the first year I had a traveling companion. Sometimes it was my sister Alice, or my good brother Enos, or even the Kid, who

greatly enjoyed such trips. He always sat upon the front seat in the hall, and on one occasion even informed me that if I ever lost the thread of my narrative he would prompt me.

But after the first year I often traveled alone, bumping and thumping about the country towns in stage coaches or hired livery teams, or traveling hundreds of miles in trains. Of course, there is an added strain to traveling alone without sight. People are always very good to help one, but there is always the anxiety as to whether some one will turn up at just the moment when you need a little assistance. Now, after many years of experience, I usually depend on the Western Union or the Postal Telegraph boys. As soon as I reach the depot in the city where I am to lecture or where I have business I get some one to show me the telephone, and I call for the office and have one of these trusty little fellows sent to my assistance.

Of course, in a large city, with all the modern complications of elevated and surface cars,

and the additional peril to foot passengers caused by the advent of the automobile into modern civilization, one has to look out for himself to a large degree. Yet I have had a good schooling and am inured to hardship. Railroad trains and trolley cars, congested streets, and the roar of this modern bedlam which we call the people's business are all as familiar to me as my own quiet study at home. So on my lecture trips or business trips, whether traveling alone, or with my wife, I always arrive at my destination safely, though often with tired, aching nerves, to which sleep and rest come only too slowly.

I began seriously assaulting the offices of magazines with my poems in 1893, at the beginning of the hard times of that year. If there is anything under heaven that might be described as a forlorn hope, it would be making one's living out of poetry. My friend, Charles Eliot Norton, than whom there was no better critic, told me twenty years ago, that if a poet the equal of Bryant should arise today, he not only could not earn his salt, but

his work would actually go begging; that in this material hurrying age, the poet could not even get a hearing for his poems, much less make enough money from them to pay for his postage stamps. He said that the poet of to-day who depended to any degree upon his work for a livelihood must starve.

This was what Professor Norton told me when I showed him some of my early poems, and asked him what chance I had for success if I tried to make a part of my living by verse writing. In the light of twenty years of experience, which I have struggled through since, I do not think he overstated the case. There is no room for beauty to-day in our hustling, bustling modern civilization, especially in America. It is the commercial age, and we are the most commercial of all the people on God's footstool.

With this encouragement in mind, I set about the task of winning a place for myself with my poems, and of earning some of my bread and butter as well. How I ever succeeded is almost a mystery to me even now.

The only things that brought me through were my three P's and that bulldog quality which I possess of never being beaten as long as I have a breath of life left in my body with which to fight.

Probably no American poet has had as many poems returned as I have,—and few have sold more for good money.

I made it a rule for years never to allow a manuscript to lie over night on my desk. When I sent out a manuscript I at once planned where I would send it when it was returned, for its return I took as a matter of course. Like a lightning juggler, I always flashed the manuscript back into the letter box almost before my secretary had read the rejection slip. I eliminated all feeling from the matter, and tore that page out of my dictionary containing the word "failure," shut my eyes to the large bills each month for stamps, and fired my boomerangs in every direction. There is hardly a magazine office or a weekly sanctum in this country into which my shafts have not whizzed, and many of them stuck

upon the pages and brought me back good checks.

Some of my dismal financial failures were my most brilliant literary successes, all of which goes to prove that art cannot be measured in dollars and cents, and that the artist who struggles hardest for the best things, may often receive a stone in place of bread.

My negro dialect poem, "How Massa Linkum Came," was refused seventeen times, and in disgust I finally gave it to the Springfield *Republican*. As soon as the public read the poem in the *Republican* it began clamoring for it, so that many American newspapers copied it, and it has been recited by school children and elocutionists ever since. Robert T. Lincoln, the son of the martyred president, was so pleased with the poem that he wrote me a long autographed letter expressing his appreciation.

My irregular sonnet, "The Mountain to the Pine," was sold for two dollars, but was afterward widely copied and translated into foreign languages. Mr. Stedman considered this

sonnet good enough to include in his *American Anthology*. As I have already said, it is also a great favorite with my friend, Helen Keller.

Here is a quatrain which, Helen writes me, has encouraged her in the struggle of life. It very well typifies the literary struggle as I fought it out during those first strenuous years.

EROSION

Even the little waves that idly dance
Against the cliff, will crumble it to sand;
And so with ceaseless toil the slightest hand
May wear away the walls of circumstance.

All my life I have been beating with little waves against the dark and forbidding walls of circumstance. If in the rubbing process they have worn me somewhat, yet I have worn my way through them to light and happiness.

Throughout the years from 1891 to 1895, while I was knocking about lecturing, I was steadily adding to my collection of verses, and dreaming of the day when I should have enough for a volume. Many of the poems that finally appeared in my first volume were writ-

ten under peculiar circumstances, in hotels and on trains, in rumbling stage coaches, and at country farmhouses. Sometimes they were composed when my heart was beating high because I had been greeted by a good audience, and then the lines would scintillate and sparkle; but often when I was discouraged and oppressed by the endless unequal struggle my best thoughts came. Even then I always sought to get something of hope and cheer into my verses, and to sound that bugle call to battle, which has always been my slogan.

In the spring of 1895 I decided that I had poems enough for a volume, so I set about getting a publisher, but was met with this astonishing proposition: None of the better-class publishers in the great cities would so much as look at a volume of poems unless the author put up the entire cost of publication in cold cash; that is, if the work was that of a new and unknown poet. They also informed me that there were only three or four poets of standing, even, whom they would consider unless the author stood behind the enterprise

financially. In other words, I might take all the risk, and they assured me that the risk was great, and they would take the profit if there was any, which would be doubtful.

This assurance was a great blow to my enterprise, but it did not discourage me. I at once set about putting my prospective book on a paying basis. I sent out several hundred circulars to my friends and acquaintances describing the volume that I proposed to publish and asking for their orders in advance. This move secured me a hundred and fifty subscribers, just half of what I needed.

I had a good many friends among the kind people in the Hampshire hills where I was born and had spent my childhood; and some of these I had not heard from, so I determined to try them still further. I hired a team on a hot day in August, and a boy to drive it, and started out as a sort of advance book agent for my own wares. I did not urge any one to subscribe, but I put the matter in its best possible light. From dawn until dark I traveled, seeing scores of people each day. The first boy

lasted just four days, and then went whimpering back home, saying that he would rather dig potatoes, or saw wood, than rush up and down the country in that way. During the next ten days I wore out four more boys, but got an additional one hundred and fifty subscribers, and the financial success of my book was assured.

Having secured subscribers enough to make my book a paying enterprise, why not publish it myself? Then if there were any profits I would have them instead of sharing them with a city publisher. With this idea I interviewed my friend, Charles F. Warner, of the Picturesque Publishing Company, at Northampton, Mass., and we decided that I should publish the book myself. After many discouraging delays by the printers it was brought out in 1895 in time for the Christmas trade, my contribution to the Yule-tide.

To all my readers who remember the little volume *Pebbles and Shells* and the great literary success it scored, this sidelight will seem like a contradiction, but all of my successes

have been built up from innumerable little failures. I have never found anything easy. Life to me has always signified struggle and temporary disappointment, with success at the end of the road.

My first literary venture received many one and two-column notices from the best literary journals, and sold the entire edition of twelve hundred copies in a few months, netting me a thousand dollars. I dedicated this first book to my mother, who had done so much to encourage and help me, and her pleasure at this success was greater even than my own.

But I kept right on lecturing, going to the larger cities, where I got better pay and more appreciation, and the following year I published *Three Little Folks,* a book of verses for children. It netted me five hundred dollars. This book was also a literary success, as well as a financial help.

In 1897 I published *Idyls of old New England;* in 1898, *Songs for Columbia's Heroes,* a volume of war poems concerning the Spanish-American War; and in 1900 I published

my last and best volume of poems, *The Hope of the World.*

These five books of verse, published between 1895 and 1900, netted me three thousand dollars, and with the lecturing I was enabled to do gave me a fair income.

In 1899, my dear mother, who had read and planned literary dreams with me for so long, died, and with her passing the desire to write verse was partly eclipsed. We had read the classics together ever since I was a child and my verses had meant even more to her than to myself, so with my poetic inspiration gone, the fount of song was temporarily checked, and my life turned into another channel.

All my laurels gained as a poet I gladly share with my dear mother, to whom I wrote the following sonnet after her burial:

TIRED HANDS

Folded they lie, upon her tranquil breast,
My mother's tired hands, their labors done,
Knotted and scarred in battles they have won,
Worn to the quick, by love's unkind behest.
Pulseless they lie, while from the crimson west

A flood of glory from the setting sun
Falls on her face; I hear the deep "Well-done,"
God's Angelus, that calls her soul to rest.
Found is the Holy Grail of knightly quest,
Here in her home, where such brave deeds were done
As knight ne'er saw, since chivalry begun;
She suffered, toiled, and died, God knows the rest,
But if Christ's crown shines not above her cross,
Then all is loss, immeasurable loss.

The day before she died I gave a lecture to help pay her doctor's bill, and two days after she was laid to rest I lectured again to help pay her funeral expenses. Such is the stern, relentless call of duty. Our loved ones may die and the cold earth be laid above them, but there is no rest for us. Like good soldiers we must march onward, closing up the ranks, still smiling and laughing, although a part of our hopes and our hearts are in the new grave.

CHAPTER VII

WRITING NATURE BOOKS WITHOUT EYES

The author woos and wins an artist friend for his wife —The struggle to maintain a home upon an author's income—Entrance of Master Frisky into my life—I write my first nature book—A wonderful treasure house to draw upon—Compensation for the loss of eyesight—Teaching boys and girls the beauty and wonder of nature—The writing of eighteen nature books—Pilgrimages of children to my home—Writing about big game—My scientific method in writing a nature book—Studying nature as it comes to my very door—Seeing nature by proxy —The Spring fishing fever—Pleasant days in canoe and camp—Friends who have helped me—My friends among nature writers—Observing nature merely by hearing.

In the Autumn of 1899 I was married to Miss Bessie W. Bell, a Hadley girl, whom I had known ever since my coming to Hadley. We had been engaged for five years, and our marriage had been postponed several times,

owing to sickness in my own family, and other misfortunes which had scattered my small savings.

Miss Bell was a talented artist, having studied with Bruce Crane, and also at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. We were both interested in the out-of-doors world, and together loved truth and beauty in whatever guise it came to hand. At that time I kept a horse and carriage with which to travel about the country upon my lecture trips. We had, during our courtship, taken nearly all the fine carriage drives to be found in Western Massachusetts. Often these drives were excursions after bits of landscape for her brush, either done in water color or oil. So we often stopped for hours in some pleasant spot in the woods; she sketching and I writing poems, and whistling for the birds and squirrels.

I admired my artist friend for her straightforwardness and love of beauty, and because she did not discount me for not having eyesight. So as we worked along parallel lines, we saw much of each other. Acquaintance

ripened into friendship, and then Cupid got in his sly work. When I began publishing my first books, my sweetheart's clever pencil drawings found their way quite naturally into them. The reader will find illustrations from her pencil and brush in four of my books of poems.

It was a rather sorrowful start that we had. My mother had just died after a long sickness, and my bank account was again a minus quantity, but my artist took the risk where a less courageous girl would have hesitated. It was largely due to her economy and ingenuity that I finally purchased our pleasant home at Hadley, Massachusetts, and equipped it with all modern conveniences. So while my mother first inspired me to write, and helped me with my first four books, my wife took up the work where she laid it down, and has been a very important helper ever since.

In the Summer of 1897 I had brought down from the Hampshire Hills, on one of my lecture trips, a little fuzzy collie pup. I had brought the loving little dog home with me to

Master Frisky, the hero of two of Mr. Hawkes's books

liven up our house, for at the time we were struggling with a great bereavement, my dear sister Alice, the playmate of my youth, having died the Spring before. Master Frisky, for that was what I called the dog, because of his frolicsome nature, became a very important member of the household.

While my mother had been ill two years later I had amused the family by telling them some most improbable humorous stories, of which Master Frisky was the hero, and this finally led to the writing of my first volume of prose, a dog story called Master Frisky. This was published in 1902, and was both a literary and financial success.

The writing of this book called my attention to the great vogue of nature books at the time, and I read many of them with delight. I did not have to read far to discover that my own brain was teeming with just such stories of field and forest. Had I not tramped the woods for seven or eight years, in all seasons? Had I not hunted nearly all species of game birds to be found in New England, not to mention

foxes, squirrels, rabbits, and raccoons? Did I not know the habitats of all the denizens of the New England forest? Moreover, from reading the current nature books, it seemed to me that these writers did not love or appreciate nature any more sincerely than I did. If only I could get my boyhood experiences into print!

Then little by little the meaning of all my years of blindness was made plain to me. If I had always retained my sight, I would have gone on for the rest of my life seeing things, learning of nature from reading her great book, without ever stopping to think what the things that I saw meant. I must have gone on hunting and trapping, fishing and camping, without ever having gathered together or arranged my knowledge.

This then was my way out. I had lost my eyesight in the deep woods, with a gun in my hand, in the very hour of despoiling nature. I would turn about and tell the American boys and girls all these intensely interesting things that I had discovered in conjunction with other nature students. But I would go further than

that. I would show them the life of field and forest from the side of the hunted. I would try and get the attitude of all my little furred and feathered friends, and put it into books. I would teach children, not only to know and love the birds and squirrels, but also to care for them, and to help them in their unequal struggle; in the desperate battle for existence that they daily wage.

So I wrote my first nature book, Little Foresters, drawing almost entirely upon my boyhood experiences for its chapters. To my great delight, Mr. Charles Copeland, a nature artist whom I greatly admired, was chosen for the illustrator, and since then he has illustrated over a dozen books for me, and helped my hundreds of thousands of readers to understand the text, as few nature illustrators are able to do. We have worked together like the good friends we are, and given both pleasure and information to a very wide circle of boys and girls, both in this country and abroad, where my nature books are widely read.

Merely from my boyhood experiences, from

the things that I had seen with my own wide-open keen blue eyes, I wrote eight nature books, all of which took the story form, to instruct and entertain the mind of youth. There are few Boy Scouts or Boy Campers in America who have not read these books, and they are also used in the public schools both in this country and in England as supplementary readers. In 1907 The Teachers' Reading Circle of the State of Illinois put my book *Shaggycoat,* the story of the beaver, upon their accepted list for use in that large state, and since that year the use of these books for school purposes in the United States has steadily increased.

From my own part of Massachusetts school children make annual pilgrimages to my house by the hundreds. When I am informed that such a delegation is coming, I plaster the walls of several rooms with the original drawings from which my books have been illustrated, and Mrs. Hawkes and I give up the day to the little people, whose interest and gratitude are ample reward for the loss of a day's time.

But this New England field of activity was

not large enough for me and I soon widened it. It was all very well to write of the small creatures that I had known so intimately in my boyhood, but I was also deeply interested in big game. The haunts and the habits of the moose, the bear, the wolf, the bison, and all the other species of big game that have made this country famous, appealed to my imagination most vividly.

My father, and my uncle Mr. William Hawkes, had gone west in the early fifties, when things were doing for sportsmen in the middle west. For hours at a time, I had sat breathlessly at my father's knees, and listened to thrilling stories of wolf coursing. He had told of running down the great gray timber wolf on horseback, galloping madly across the open prairie, which was honeycombed with prairie-dog holes, where a misstep of the madly galloping horse would break a man's neck; of prairie chicken and wild turkey shooting, and of hunting the great herds of buffalo in Nebraska upon horseback. These stories had whetted my imagination for more, and I had

read of hunting trips and camping on the great plains and in the Rockies until all these scenes were as familiar to me as were the woods of my own loved New England.

So I soon turned my attention to writing of the habits and habitats of big game; not as a museum naturalist, who dreams over his books and specimens, and then puts down cold tabulated facts, but as a participant in the wild rough life, one who lived on the trail and lived in the scenes he described. To accomplish this firsthand knowledge, I summoned to my aid many friends who had seen much of wild life, —trappers, guides, and frontiersmen,—men with the bark on, who knew nature at first hand.

I supplemented their knowledge with all I could learn from books. For years I have made it a rule to read everything of value that has ever been written upon the subject about which I am writing. Thus, in preparing to write my story of the beaver, Shaggycoat, I worked gathering facts for nearly five years before putting pen to paper. In my seven

animal biography books, beginning with *Shaggycoat* and ending with the *Story of the Reindeer,* not yet published, I have aimed to include every known fact about each of the animals in question, and to include nothing but facts.

To keep all unauthenticated or improbable statements about animals out of my books has been a task that has kept my nerves on edge for the past eight or ten years, as this kind of writing has been constantly under attack, by Uncle John Burroughs, and Colonel Roosevelt, as well as dozens of other well-known writers. But I have done my work so carefully that never during that time have any of my books been attacked for untruthfulness. I consider this one of the most important of my achievements, as most of the best animal story writers have been under fire of a questionable sort.

Yet my books are not perfect in that particular, and I doubt if an entirely accurate book of natural history was ever written. The subject is so multifarious, and the conditions

under which the birds and animals live are so varied, that these differing conditions are bound to breed irregularities, so there can be no hard and fast rules.

To show how painstakingly my books are worked out I merely need to mention this fact: When I begin a book that deals with an animal living in a territory that I am not wholly familiar with, I go to the nearest library and come home literally loaded with books and maps of the country. First I master the topography of the region until I know all the rivers and mountain ranges, and the general character of the country. Then I take up its flora and study that until I know all the plants and trees, and their relation to the landscape. Finally I attack the subject of the country's fauna, and make myself acquainted with all forms of life to be found in this land. I literally live in that country, through my books and maps, provided I am not able to visit it, until I have written the book. Likewise I take on the character of the animal I am writing about. My friends might tell you that I was

The eternal struggle

a bear for a whole year, during which time I was writing of Ursus.

Patient, painstaking, heartbreaking toil I do not mind if I can get accuracy, and make the subject live. The one thing that I want is to make my animal live upon the pages, and to have the reader become nearly as familiar with him as he is with his best friend. My theory in regard to this whole matter is, that all things belong to the man with imagination and courage enough to reach out and take them.

Living as I do in a country village, with the world of nature all about me, I am still able to do much very effective nature study, and gather a few interesting facts each year. My home faces upon the broadest and most beautiful street in the world, which is flanked by four rows of enormous elms. From that happy day in March when the first bluebird perches upon the tiptop branch of one of these trees, and greets me with his sweet little "Cheerily," until he flies away in the Autumn, one of the last of the song birds to leave, this wonderful

street is an aviary of no mean order. I am able each year without going out of my street to identify over fifty species of birds. At the back of my house is a small orchard which is a favorite nesting place of the birds, and here I discover a few more species that do not ordinarily frequent the street.

In company with some one who has good eyes, with an opera glass and a bird book, I pass many happy hours while the silver-footed moments of Summertime go by. The one trouble that I experience in this study is that different people see so differently, and that many people do not observe at all. This is true even of color, and I cannot always be sure that any two people are describing the same color or marking in the same terms. But I was fairly well grounded in bird lore before I lost my sight, so I am able to supplement my friends in different observations, with accurate knowledge of the particular bird that we are after.

Upon my fishing trips on the lakes and rivers in this vicinity I am likewise enabled to do some very interesting nature study, and the

men who accompany me on these trips are good help, as most of them are familiar with the out-of-doors, and know a blue heron from a blue-jay when they see it. It is with such men that I delight to train.

Mr. Charles Hallock, the founder of *Forest and Stream,* who has often been called the dean of American sportsmen because he opened up so much of the new hunting and fishing country in both the United States and Canada, has been a great help to me. From the very first he was interested in my books. Many abstruse nature problems I have referred to him, and have always been sure of his accurate knowledge.

My uncle, William S. Hawkes, who went west in the early fifties with my father, was for several years my amanuensis, and his experience in the west when that country was raw and wild has given me much material for books.

Still another good friend was Mrs. E. J. Aldrich, one of my neighbors. Mrs. Aldrich had been a taxidermist for many years, and

possessed a large collection of mounted specimens of both song and game birds from all parts of the country. Many a pleasant half day we spent together going over her collection, and making notes of measurements and markings, and comparing species. This friend also did much of my proof reading, and was the best speller who ever corrected proof for me.

My brave little mother-in-law, Mrs. S. R. Bell, must also not be forgotten, for she did much of my reading, on both proof and manuscript. Often she took the time, when her own arduous work pressed, and was an enthusiastic helper.

Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Aldrich were women of culture, being graduates of Mount Holyoke college, and most excellent help. Both of these good friends, whom I lost by death in the same year, did much to take the place of my dear mother, who had been my mainstay for so many years.,

I have many friends among the nature writers who have been kind enough to say pleasant

things about my books. Among these are Ernest Thompson Seton, Dallas Lore Sharp, William J. Long, and Gene Stratton-Porter. Mrs. Porter writes that she considers my books unique among the nature writing done in this country, and that my animal biographies are the best things of their kind that she knows of. As Mrs. Porter is a trained naturalist,—the Bird Woman in her novels,—I consider compliments from her valuable and hard to obtain.

It would surprise one of the uninitiated to know how much I can observe of the out-of-doors, either in field or forest, or on lakes and streams, wholly by myself without the aid of eyes. My hearing for the slight sounds of nature is so keen, and my senses are so quick to detect new clues either by sound or scent, that I am just as apt to discover the new and wonderful things as are my seeing friends who accompany me. In the Spring I hear more wild geese go over than does any one else in the vicinity, because my ears are unconsciously keyed to catch their stirring water slogan. To the trained ear every rustle and every snap-

ping twig in the forest means something, and all these slight sounds tell their own story.

I would not need to ask any one to identify many of these sounds for me. The steady trot, trot, trot, of a fox is no more like the uneven hopping of a rabbit, than the galloping of a horse is like his trot. A bird and squirrel never rustle the leaves of a tree in the same way. The scratching of small squirrel feet down the bark of a tree is as unlike the similar slight sound made by a woodpecker traveling up the bark as can be imagined.

The bird language also I probably understand much better than a man with sight ever could, for all the little intonations are so clear to me. Happiness, fear and alarm, querulousness, good spirits or pain, all are conveyed by my little friends in a language as plain as the spoken word. Only it takes the ear to hear, and the heart to understand these things.

My nature books give me joy above everything else. Into them has gone the best there is in me, so is it any wonder that I love them as my own flesh and blood?

CHAPTER VIII

PASTIMES AND RECREATIONS

Fisherman's luck, and a fisherman's consolation—Good times at Three Lakes—Furred and feathered friends about Three Lakes—Daybreak at the shack—Norwottuck and the Ox-bow—The first appearance of Judge Irwin's automobile—The true spirit of the Fan—My methods of watching a game of baseball—My friend the Ump, and the home team—Yelling with the crowd—Tired yet happy at the close of the game—Football by telephone and telegraph—Getting early election returns by wire—The Northampton Municipal theater, and Smith College Concert course—Indoor games and recreations—Club life; being a good mixer—Make friends and be a friend.

I HAVE always made it a rule to mix as much sport and recreation as possible with my arduous literary work. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy; besides, I truly believe that Jack will do more and better work if he lets up for half a day occasionally and gives his tired nerves a rest. So each season I look

forward eagerly to whatever it affords of pastime and diversion.

In the early Spring, about April 15th, I get the fishing fever. Then all my fishing tackle has to be looked up and gone over in anticipation of the first day's fishing. Here in Massachusetts my friends are all out on April 15th whipping the trout brooks, but I do not go the first day, because many years of experience have taught me that this day is full of disappointment. Besides, it is much too cold for me to want to fish then. Not that I mind the cold weather, but trout fishing to me means a great deal that one cannot get on the fifteenth. It means warm sunbeams, and balmy winds, in which I luxuriate; bird songs, and fragrance, and sweet communion with nature.

I am never disappointed at an empty fish basket, and I very rarely come home empty handed; but I would be disappointed to come home empty hearted. If I am to enjoy my fishing, I must commune with the robin and the bluebird, the grackles and the song sparrows; I must hear the meadow larks whistling

Going for black bass

their shrill "Spring o' the Year, Spring o' the Year," while I fish at the deep pools in the meadow.

Of course, I cannot knock about along the trout streams as I used to when a boy, but can only fish the deep holes, where the fishing is open, and the walking smooth. But there is so much doing in the world about me, and I drink such deep draughts of nature's wine, that I do not mind small annoyances.

About the middle of May, when the water is warm enough for the fish to bite in the lakes and ponds, I do some fishing that is more within my limited range of activity; for I can catch as many fish from a boat or canoe, or from the shore, as anyone else. I usually make a trip early in the season to a fishing ground that I call Three Lakes. These three beautiful woodland lakes are partly surrounded by forest, and are connected by narrow channels. Our cottage or hunting shack is located near the water, and all night long one can hear the deep booming of the great bass bullfrogs, intermingled with the voices of the peepers and

the croakers,—the frog orchestra of Three Lakes.

For years the crows have built their nest in a tall pine that stands by the lodge, and in the night one often hears the startled squawks of young crows as they cry out in troubled dreams. From up the road comes the mournful refrain of a whippoorwill who has made this country his headquarters for several seasons. Altogether, it is a treezy, breezy, fragrant, pungent spot, distilling that aroma of the forest which spells sweet, deep sleep.

About half-past four in the morning the first rays of the sun gild the tops of the distant trees, and after greeting the coming of the day-god with glad song the birds all fly away to get their breakfast. Then some one in our party arouses the rest with a wild western yell, and we all tumble out and hurry on our clothes. Breakfast is prepared quickly over a little charcoal camp cooker, and by half-past five we are on the lake ready for the day's fishing.

Fishing upon these lakes is always attended with much interest that does not pertain purely

to the sport, but to the things we may discover as the hours slip happily by. Maybe a great blue heron wings by; or perhaps it is a fish-hawk, uttering his cheerful fisherman's greeting; or it may be nothing more than mud hens, or sandpipers, or a score of song birds that fairly swarm among the bushes along the edge of the lake; but certainly it is a beautiful spot where one may forget care and fret, slough off weariness of soul, put on a good tan, and develop a keen appetite. If I had a deed of these three woodland lakes, and the forest about them, I could not enjoy them more, for they are mine while I live upon them.

But I do not need to go so far afield for good fishing and pleasant boating, for the street upon which I live runs at either end to the Connecticut River. This quaint old street rests across one of the bends in the Connecticut known as the Ox-bow. So I have merely to push my boat on wheels to the head of the street, and then launch it, and I am on one of the most beautiful rivers that ever flowed in a background of meadow and mountains, a scene

such as the Old World, with all its historical association and literary praise, cannot equal.

We at once push our fifteen-foot St. Lawrence River boat, built of cedar, and more treacherous even than a canoe, to the further side of the river, and when about fifty feet from the bank turn her head down stream and float. An occasional push from my friend's paddle keeps her from drifting too near shore, and thus we drift for the entire length of the Ox-bow, the boat traveling perhaps three miles an hour, fast enough for trolling.

I sit in the stern of the boat, with one trolling line fastened to my wrist, and another on a rod, while my friend holds his line in his teeth; or perhaps he just smokes and watches the beautiful scene slip by. Onward we glide through the wonderful green meadows, under the great elms that fringe the bank, and the three bridges, and so on, until after two hours we are back at the foot of my street, only a mile from where we started out, but having covered seven miles of beautiful river to make the distance. This trip is always enough to

make one day very happy, and to offset several days of hard work.

Fishing is not the only outdoor sport that the Spring months bring to me, for as soon as the baseball season opens I become deeply interested in the national game. I have followed baseball closely ever since the days of Clarkson and Kelly, Boston's twenty-thousand-dollar battery. I became interested in the Bean Eaters many years ago when I was a student at Perkins Institute and have followed up the sport ever since.

About the middle of April the college season, as well as that in the big leagues, begins, and then the newspapers hold a new interest for me; but it is not until the local league opens at Northampton, Massachusetts, that I really get into the game.

My friend, Judge Richard W. Irwin of Northampton, usually comes over in his large automobile and gets me for the first game. The Judge is as much interested in the game as any boy, and is a jolly good companion besides. If he is not on hand for the first game

I jump upon the automobile truck of a farmer neighbor and ride over with him.

It must not be imagined that I only take a partial interest in the game and am a sort of outsider, for there is no one in the grandstand or on the bleachers who follows the game more closely, or with more interest than I do. My knowledge of what is going forward on the diamond is so accurate that I can report a game for a newspaper, and have written a good deal about the national game first and last, these articles being very popular.

We will suppose, in order to show how I follow the game, that we are sitting in the grandstand immediately behind the home plate. In that case the diamond and the field are a geometrical figure immediately in front of me. The player nearest to me, and immediately in front, is the catcher. Then farther on, in the middle of the diamond, though still in line, is the pitcher; still farther away is the second baseman, and away beyond him the center fielder. To my right is the first baseman, and still farther away, but nearly in line with him,

is the right fielder. To my left are the short-stop and the third baseman, and farther away is the left fielder. This is the picture that I always have in mind when play is called.

When the umpire cries "Play ball," my nerves are strung up to the highest pitch.

"Ball," cries the umpire, and I hear the ball fall with a slight spat into the catcher's mitt. By the slight sound that it made I know that the ball pitched was a drop, for the force had nearly all gone out of it.

"Ball," cries the umpire again. But this ball strikes the catcher's mitt with a vicious spat, so it was not a drop. Probably it was an out, or perhaps it was too high. Anyway it was a ball, and what sort of one does not much matter.

"Strike," calls the umpire. Now the question arises in my mind: did the batter swing at the ball, or was the strike called on him? But a spectator near by sets me right by observing: "He ought to have offered at that one," so I know it was called.

"Strike," again calls the umpire, and again

I am puzzled as to whether the strike was called or the batsman offered.

"Gee!" cries a small boy near me. "If he had hit that one it would have gone over the fence." So I know he offered at it viciously.

Again the pitcher winds up and there is a loud crack from the bat. There is a rather long minute of suspense, and then I hear the ball strike in the shortstop's mitt. It was a pop fly, which went rather high, and that was why I waited so long to hear the catch. If the sound had come quickly I would have known by the same reasoning that it was a hot drive, going low to the ground, and that the shortstop stabbed it, as they say.

Another batsman steps to the plate and hits the first ball pitched, sharply. I hear the ball strike the shortstop's mitt again, and a second later it resounds in the mitt of the first baseman over at my right. It was a ground ball, and was fielded nicely and thrown accurately, and the umpire cries, "Out."

Often when the decision is close I listen intently to see whether the feet of the base run-

ner strike the base or the ball the baseman's mitt first. If the base runner makes first and I hear soon after the ball spat in the baseman's mitt I know the pitcher is throwing to first to catch him. As soon as a runner gets upon the base the coaching gives me a clue each time as to what happens on the base. Each time the coach cries sharply, "Look out!" I imagine the runner pitching for the bag, and I hear the ball spat in the baseman's mitt, telling of the throw. The same rules apply to second base, and also to third. To any one familiar with the game, every word of the coach means a corresponding motion on the field.

When a batted ball goes away out into the field I have to listen sharply to hear the fielder catch it, but my ear is so trained with attending many hundreds of games, that I can usually hear the ball fall to the ground if it is muffed. If I did not, the fate of the base runner would give me the necessary clue. Very rarely, if I am paying attention, am I obliged to ask my companion where the ball went and what the play was. Grounders I usually hear

skimming along the diamond, and very high flies I recognize by the time the ball stays in the air.

Thus the play goes on for nine exciting innings, and I am sure there is no one on the grounds more excited or interested than myself.

Two or three times I have been hit by a batted or thrown ball while sitting in the bleachers, or in an automobile, but have always come off with a whole skin. Perhaps the closest call that I have had to serious injury occurred one day when a small boy, who was sitting between my knees, got a very hard drive of a foul which came into the bleachers. It came like a cannon ball, and struck the little chap in the cheek, but he was good grit, and was all right after a few minutes, being more frightened than hurt.

There is something intoxicating and exhilarating in yelling in unison with several thousand people, just as you do when your pinch hitter bangs out a hit and wins the game. The yell that goes up from that eager throng on

such an occasion is barbaric and grand, like the music of the sea.

I always go home from a game tired, but happy, and sure of a better night's sleep for the thrilling afternoon's sport. My own restricted activities in athletics make me turn with even more zest to the great American game, which does so much each year to tan the faces and harden the sinews of the American baseball public. So baseball will always find an ardent champion in myself, and I know of hundreds of tired business men who turn to this clean exciting game for recreation and pleasure, and to escape the grind of their daily business life. Long live the great American game!

The football season follows closely upon the heels of baseball, and while I do not attend many football games, yet I am always interested in the big games played by the colleges. Each Wednesday and Saturday evening I get the scores through the courtesy of the New England telephone people at least half a day before they appear in the newspapers of the country. In the case of the Harvard, Yale,

and Princeton games, I always get the score by quarters over the telephone as fast as the game is played, and I always know the final results very soon after the whistle blows.

Each Autumn on election evening I get election returns in the same way. A small company of my neighbors usually gather at my house, and I sit at the telephone and give them the returns as fast as they come over the wire.

I have always believed in living in the present; not only to-day, but the very present instant. News that is a day or two days old has lost its interest for me.

With the coming of Autumn Mrs. Hawkes and myself always renew our interest in the theatrical and concert season. There is a fine concert course each year at Smith College, to which we always subscribe, and this, with concerts at Amherst College, and miscellaneous musicals at Northampton, give us a generous musical year.

Then there is the municipal theater at Northampton, the only one of the kind in the

United States. This theater presents a new play each week through its excellent stock company. The plays are not the very latest successes, but the successes of last year, and some old favorites. Here we attend thirty or forty plays each winter.

The Winter season is also the time when we do a great deal of reading. I mean each Winter to skim over all the best sellers in order to know what is uppermost in current publications. Most of the new magazines find their way to our reading table; thus reading, music, and the theater provide an interesting Winter.

Then, when we are tired of reading, there are many indoor games of which I am passionately fond. I have always enjoyed any game that offered a good contest, whether it be of brawn or brain. So I get a great deal of pleasure from whist, cribbage, and pinochle, not to mention over a score of other card games that I play, my pack being marked by the braille system. I can run these cards through my hands, feeling the dots, and play as readily as any one. Checkers and chess I also used to

play, but of late years I find them too arduous after a day of hard writing.

The Northampton Club, to which I belong, affords a pleasant place to meet business men, lawyers, and doctors, who like to get together and chat, play whist, and talk politics. The S. A. R. and several men's church clubs round out my Winter's sociability. I have always made it a business as well as a pleasure to cultivate men and women. To be a good mixer is, according to my creed, most important. A writer must know his fellow men, and he cannot know them without being with them and of them. So I have always made it a business to know everybody, and to like every one who is likable. Men and women are the compound from which I mix the elixir of life.

Find good in every one, and the world will find good in you.

Be a friend to every one, and you will have friends.

Live in the present, or you will not live at all. The past is merely a retrospect, and the future is merely a dream which you may not

live to realize; but the present, that tiny second which we may grasp as it flies, is ours—ours to fight in and succeed in; ours to live and be loved in; and it is about the only thing that we really possess in this evanescent life.

So I grasp each moment as it flies as though it were my last, and squeeze out of it every last particle of truth and beauty that it possesses; each grain of hope and cheer, each iota of love and friendship; for of these things, and these alone, life is made up.

CHAPTER IX

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BLINDNESS

Having all one's landmarks swept away—The depressing effect of perennial darkness—A sunshine factory—The ceaseless battle—Character in the human voice—Tone-color, and a smile seen by telephone—The voice indicates age, health, and disposition—Readjusting one's soul and body to blindness—Scientific tone color as noted in music—The sixth sense—How the sixth sense aids the blind—Scientific explanation of the sixth sense—Telepathy and reading character and motives—Introspection as a result of blindness—Stars in my endless night.

I CAN conceive of few more radical changes in the life of an individual than that of going from the world of light and color, scintillating with beauty, to that other world of endless darkness, heavy with its somber shades of perpetual gloom. Perhaps the first and most vivid sense that one has in coming into the world of darkness is a feeling of unreality, and

if you will stop to consider you will easily understand this statement. Many a time in your own life, when kept awake by pain or anxiety, you have been impressed with the unreality of night. All its shapes and sounds were unreal, eerie, and uncertain. And how welcome was daylight to dispel these illusive, uncertain shadows!

Next to the unreality of perennial night is its depressing effect. There is a heaviness about perpetual darkness that is very hard to dispel. Light breeds cheerfulness. The very sunbeams smile and dance, and one cannot help but smile with them; while shadows have just the opposite effect.

Often one goes into a house where all the blinds are kept shut, and where there is such a depressing air, because of the gloomy effect, that one breathes a sigh of relief when the open daylight is reached. So it is in the world where the shutters are always closed. There is a sense of unreality and a depression and repression that are very hard to shake off.

And yet in the face of this statement we

have the fact that blind people are as a class surprisingly cheerful and full of sunlight. The very natural question follows, how do they do it? They manage it, just as all arduous achievements are performed, through their courage and splendid optimism,—courage and optimism that are not in any sense theirs because of their affliction, but characteristics which have been cultivated, patiently and courageously, through weary hours of darkness and despair.

I know many blind people, and I am sure that they are the most courageous people in the whole world. They give back the most hope and cheer, love and friendship, for what they receive at the hands of fate, of any class of people that exist. Life to them is a battle and a struggle, which never ends. They must fight for hope and cheer, laughter and happiness, every inch of the way along life's path.

I have seen old dependent blind women, living in a home for the blind, whose lives seemed so bare and meager to me that it made my heart ache just to talk with them, and yet

The author at his Hadley home

they were cheerful and happy, always looking on the sunny side and telling of their blessings. Their courage to me was the most inspiring and beautiful thing that I ever witnessed.

The unreality experienced in losing eyesight is probably enhanced by having one's friends, the faces and forms that we loved, metamorphosed into mere voices,—voices that stand about us in the shadows, tender and loving, yet so different from the faces we knew. From this fact the voice comes to mean much more to the blind person than to the seeing. One without sight notices the slightest variation of feeling in the voice. Sympathy, mirth, or pathos is expressed as freely and fully in the voice as in the face.

Health also is very noticeable in the voice, and the absence of health likewise. There is a tired voice, a mirthful voice, a despairing voice, a voice for all the varying shades of pain and pleasure. The voice also is a sure barometer of age. I can tell a person's age as readily by his voice as you can by his looks.

The loss of eyesight seems for a time to upset the perfect working of the entire nervous system. The nerves have to adjust themselves to new conditions and rearrange the channels of communication. On first losing one's sight one is impressed with the fact that all noises sound much too loud. Every one speaks louder than he used to, and as for sharp sudden noises, they make one fairly jump out of his skin. I do not know whether this is because the nerves are overwrought, or because a part of the sight nervous energy is deflected to sound nerves, but certain it is that it takes several months for sounds to get toned down to a normal volume, and one never quite overcomes the tendency to jump at sharp sounds.

Then one is immediately, on losing sight, impressed with the fact that all the senses are interdependent and considerably mixed up. We speak of tone color, and to a great many people the phrase is meaningless; but it is a very real thing, and to myself, as well as to many other people who have seen and then lost their sight, all musical or prolonged sound has

color. As a general rule, the higher the pitch of the tone the higher keyed is the color, and the lower the pitch of the tone the darker the color.

The middle register of the piano or organ, or of the human voice for the same pitch, is dull red, and as the pitch ascends it goes to light red, and pink, and very light yellow, up to white, until in the eighth octave there is no color at all, just as to some people there is no sound discernible in this octave. From the middle register of the human voice or the piano, the color descends to purple, deep blue, and finally black, and the very lowest notes have no perceptible color.

This absence of color in the lowest notes has a perfect corollary in sound, for I remember reading an article by Mr. Thayer, the celebrated organist, who said that there were tones in the thunder of Niagara Falls which he could hear, and which the average ear could not discern at all because of their low pitch.

In the same way, but to a less degree, the senses of touch and feeling are interdependent.

To pass my hand over the plush on the car seats in a railroad train always gives me a bitter-taste sensation,—a puckery taste similar to that of wild chokecherries. For several months after first losing my sight the taste of certain kinds of food gave me a sensation of color, but this gradually wore off.

Probably the strangest of all the psychical phenomena connected with blindness is a sort of sixth sense that all blind people possess to a greater or less degree. This is a sort of physical sight or discernment. By means of it a person without sight is enabled to discern solid objects to a distance of eight or ten feet away, and if the object is large, such as the side of a house, even farther away. This is the very greatest help, and it is through this sense that blind people make their way about unaided. Of course sound also helps them, and that very useful cane that all blind people carry.

Science has never fully determined what the source of this sixth sense is, or just how it works. A body must have some surface to be

discerned. My own worst enemy is the partly open door, the thin edge of which I do not discern quickly enough, if I am moving about rapidly, to avoid a collision. Objects low down, near the ground or the floor, are also hard to discern by this sixth sense, and are a great stumbling block.

Men of science advance two or three theories concerning this sense. Some say that the blind discern physically through very sensitive nerves in the face, and I think this is partly true, as with the face covered this sense is greatly reduced. Others say that it is through the sense of hearing, and I think there is also truth in that assertion, as the echo which is always present, although very slight, is of unquestionable help. Still other men of science say that the air between yourself and a solid object which you are approaching becomes more dense from the repression in the approach of two solid bodies, and there is truth in that statement as well. So this sixth sense, if such it be, probably depends upon three conditions: namely, sound, the compression of the air, and

whether the face be free to use its sensitive feelers.

There can be no question that all the perceptive faculties of the most intellectual of the blind are greatly quickened, and all those bits of knowledge which we gather through the intuitions, they are past masters of.

I read the thoughts of most people very readily. I do not mean that, if you were to think of something and ask me to tell you what you had in mind, I would have the slightest knowledge of what it was. But if you were off your guard, and talking with me, all the little reservations, the parenthetical things which you might think and not put into words, would be very plain to me.

In the same way I am conscious of good and evil in people to a remarkable degree. Goodness attracts me, and vice repels me much more strongly than it does a seeing person. This sense makes an acute blind person a very good judge of character, even though the face, which is such a good index of character, cannot be seen.

The psychological elements in our makeup, —greed, envy, hate, faith, hope, and love,— are all so actual and real to me that I wrote a play last year giving all these characteristics speaking parts. It is a sort of morality drama, in which I hope some time to show my friends the very vivid psychical world in which we live and fight the battle of life.

Perhaps one of the queerest things that come to me through the darkness is the perception of a smile, which to me is always luminous, a sort of spiritual ray which is not dependent upon the human eye to carry its message of light and cheer.

Did you ever notice, when some friend smiles, a sort of luminosity about the lips and eyes? You might not notice it once in a hundred or a thousand times, but I remember it well as a child when I had eyesight. To me now, living in darkness, the smile of nearly every one has a luminosity about it,—that is, every one who knows how to smile. Some people never smile, while others only show their teeth. But every one who lets his soul shine

out of his face when he smiles sends me a ray of spiritual light which is like a bright sunbeam falling through a chink in the shutter into a dark room.

If you were talking over the telephone to me from a hundred miles away, and sent me a smile, I would get this spiritual sunbeam just as readily as though you were right here in the room. I think this phenomenon belongs to that class of luminous apearances ascribed in all sacred writings to the spirit. The light of the eye and the light of the soul will probably some day be very real, understandable things. When we shall become a little less material, and shall approach a little nearer to the source of life, which itself is light and energy, then all these things will be made plain.

The great consolation that comes to me from blindness is that it has caused me to stop to think, and to analyze, to consider and appreciate, where otherwise I should probably have hurried along with the crowd, the vast majority of people, who eat, sleep, work, and chase the mighty dollar, without ever asking

themselves, Where am I going? What am I doing on this earthly pilgrimage? What does life mean to me, and what truth and beauty, love and friendship, can I get out of it?

The mind held in check by a physical limitation like blindness naturally turns inward. It analyzes and considers, it constructs and creates. The outside world has been to a certain degree taken away from it, so it makes a world of its own. The only trouble with this is that such a mind becomes a two-edged sword, and with too much thinking it tends to reduce life to those ashes that all material life really comes to in the end.

To offset this tendency I prescribe for myself much that is external. I mix with the world and know people. I try to march shoulder to shoulder with my seeing brother, avoiding the rough places where he can step with confidence, but still climbing, e'en though it be sometimes by a devious way, to the heights—the heights of truth, beauty and peace.

If night has overtaken me at noonday, yet have I found beauty in night. The sun at noontide showed me the world and all its wonders, but the night has shown me the universe, the countless stars and illimitable space, the vastness and the wonder of all life. The perfect day only showed me man's world, but the night showed me God's universe.

Though the night has brought me pain, and often discouragement, yet in it I have heard the stars sing together, and learned to know nature, and through nature to look up to nature's God.

CHAPTER X

ON THE DARK TRAIL

The light of the spirit—Blindness a twenty-five per cent. handicap in the work of life—Endless courage is the only armor—Never admitting the impossible—Designing and managing a great parade—Directing hundreds of workers—Thirty thousand people come to view our parade—Flattering offers to direct other pageants—My three P's again—Doing all sorts of work about home—A respite for a breathing spell—The consolation of a blind friend—Sympathy and the world war—Helen Keller as an inspiration—A good fighter—Blindness a blessing in disguise—Competing with college men and women—A desire to travel and see the world—Be strong!

THE trail that I have followed so arduously for the past thirty-one years, and which I must follow for the rest of my days, is a dark and lonely one, and I should despair of ever keeping it to the end of the journey, were it not for the inner light,—the light of the spirit, which never was on sea or land, and

which has sustained me through many crises of my life.

It seems strange, though, when I stop to think, and I do not often, that you, my brother, walk along the trail of life in full daylight, with the dancing sunbeams, and the shimmering landscape, the blue vaulted dome of heaven, and the green carpeted earth, all spread out before you, while I, your companion, who walk by your side, feel my way circumspectly along the trail in total darkness.

From a careful consideration of all the facts in the case, I am confident that blindness is a twenty-five per cent handicap in the work of life, no matter what profession you adopt. The blind person in order to succeed equally with the seeing, must put in one hundred and twenty-five per cent of energy before he can stand abreast of his seeing competitor. Not only must he work ten hours where you work eight, but he must also put much more patience into each of his ten hours' work than you do into your eight.

Where you reach out and put your hand di-

rectly upon the tool with which you are working, he must grope for it. A hundred little devices he must invent all the way along the trail, no matter whether he be a musician, a lawyer, a broommaker or a piano tuner. His shortest way home is usually the longest way around.

My own success, what little I have attained, I ascribe entirely to my three P's, patience, perseverance, and pluck, which alone have kept me to my work for so many arduous years.

Courage a blind person must have above everything else. He must be literally steeped in it. It will not do to have just an ordinary temporary supply, for the thing in hand; for if all you have is just the ordinary supply allotted to the average seeing man, you will run out in a single day. But you must have courage that is perennial,—a ceaseless fount of it,—courage for the morning, courage for the noonday, and courage for the evening.

Not only must you have courage, but you must have daring. You must have the cour-

age and the daring to do all sorts of impossible things that all your best friends tell you you cannot, for some of your best friends are sure to put the most obstacles in your path by telling you this or that undertaking is impossible. I have never for a moment admitted that I could not do anything that was within the bounds of reason, and many things I have done which seem as incredible as a fairy story. I will merely give one example to illustrate.

The historical old town of Hadley, in which I live, celebrated its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary in the summer of 1909. I have always made it a rule to be interested in civic life, so was interested in that celebration.

Nearly a year before the event came off I became interested in a plan for presenting at the time a great historical pageant or parade on wheels. I had never seen a pageant or parade in my whole life, but somehow I had a very good idea of how it looked. So the executive committee on the celebration finally appointed me as a committee of one to draw up a plan for such a parade.

I consulted with men in this part of the state who have handled civic parades, which were quite different from what I had in mind, and finally I presented a typewritten plan for a historical parade. This report covered twenty-two typewritten pages, and went into great detail.

I was then appointed permanent chairman of a large parade committee and we set to work to carry out my plans. Twenty of the floats which finally figured in the parade I designed myself, writing out several pages of specifications for each float. I divided my committee into ten smaller committees and set each subcommittee to work on a float by itself.

We next turned the town into an artificial flower manufactory, and thousands of beautiful crepe paper chrysanthemums, roses and poppies were made.

After a year of the most arduous work that I ever undertook, during the last month of which I stayed constantly at the telephone and hardly had time for my meals, the parade was

complete. It consisted of forty beautiful historical floats, and twenty or thirty decorated carriages and automobiles, the whole extending in a line, when formed for the march, reaching two miles, and taking an hour to pass a given point.

There were seven hundred people in the parade and nearly two hundred horses, and the whole formed one of the most imposing historical spectacles ever seen in America. That was what the newspapers of New England and New York said. I did not see the parade, so I cannot judge.

But when it finally passed by the reviewing stand where I sat, there was not a float in the whole procession that I did not have a perfect picture of in my mind, for had I not created most of them? I knew the length and breadth of each float, and its color scheme; for at least twenty of the color schemes I had studied out myself in total darkness.

The Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts, who was in attendance with 30,000 other citizens of the State, said that our parade was

Float designed by the author and shown in the Quarto-millennial Pageant at Hadley, Mass.

the equal of the Champlain parade, which he had just witnessed, and which cost many thousands of dollars, while ours was inexpensive; and a New York paper in a two-column editorial afterwards said that our parade was better planned and executed than was the Hudson-Fulton Parade, which had been the pride of New York City.

Of course many hundreds of men and women helped to make the parade a success, but all worked under my supervision, and all carried out to a letter the twenty-two pages of typewritten instructions that I had first drawn up. How we did it with so little money is a mystery to me now, and it is an undertaking that I would not want to attempt again. Several times since I have received flattering offers to do similar stunts for New England cities, but I have always refused. One will do for love of his own town what he would not do for money.

I merely put forward this description of our historical parade to show that nothing, no matter how seemingly difficult, is really impos-

sible to one with imagination and daring, and with a generous supply of courage, supplemented by the three P's of patience, perseverance, and pluck.

Such little chores as sawing and splitting wood, making chicken coops and mending henyard fences, mowing and raking on the lawn, cutting out sidewalks, husking corn, and similar homely work I have always taken great pleasure in. I find these tasks that I can perform with the hands a pleasant and necessary offset to my strenuous literary life. There is nothing else in the world that is quite as good a safety-valve for both the body and the spirit as getting into a good perspiration. One thing there is that is a constant disappointment to me: my lameness prevents my taking as many and as long walks as I would like. I can conceive of no more quiet and satisfactory pleasure, simple though it be, than to go for a half day in the woods, with a bird book, an opera glass, and a keen pair of eyes; or perhaps even better than that, to strap one's knapsack upon one's back and take to the

friendly road, just tramping where the spirit leads.

I often think that if the dark could let up for a week, or even a day, and I could get one more glimpse of the green fields and the blue heaven, I could go back to my lonely exile with new courage for the dark days ahead.

Once each year I put aside work to visit my alma mater, or some friends with whom I was chummy at school. There is a deal of comfort in the hearty handshake of the other fellow who is also hitting the dark trail. We may not say anything about the struggle, but we both understand. Besides, one can always forget his own perplexities by taking an interest in the other fellow's problem, and at Perkins Institute I know there are hundreds of boys and girls struggling with the problems that I wrestled with a quarter of a century ago at the same school.

I usually lecture in chapel, or give them a rousing speech in the classroom, and by trying to inspire them add to my own stock of inspiration.

Sympathy is a quality that blind people possess in abundance, but I often wish I did not have so much, for it keeps one continually on the rack for the other fellow's misfortune or hard luck.

For the past week I have hardly been able to get out of my mind for five minutes at a time, thoughts of the two mighty phalanges of bayonets, stretching from north of Brussels for two hundred and fifty miles to the Swiss frontier, where the longest battle line ever seen in the world's history is formed. Not only do I think of these millions of brothers, Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Belgians, all lined up at the behest of Kaisers and Czars, ready to take each others' lives, but I also think of the millions of mothers and sweethearts, children and wives—those who fight at home—waiting with heavy hearts for news from the front.

When I think of this thing that has come to pass in 1914 among Christian nations, representing the highest civilization of the world, it seems to me that the light of the world is

eclipsed, and a darkness a million times worse than blindness has overspread the earth.

You may wonder while you read these pages how I write books. It is very simple, just as most things turn out to be if you grasp them with a strong hand. I am sitting at a Fox typewriter while my own supple fingers fly over the keys, clicking out from thirty to forty words per minute. That is much better than dictating to a third party, who might frighten away my muse, for she is rather capricious and often will not come when I call for her.

If I get discouraged along the dark trail I have merely to think of someone else who is worse off than myself, or who has accomplished more than I have under similar handicap, and that makes me ashamed and sets me to my task again. Helen Keller in darkness and silence has contributed more to the world's courage and heroism than a whole regiment of soldiers, and dear old Fanny Crosby, for over ninety years in total darkness, went on singing her songs of Faith and Glory. Truly the

world is full of heroes and heroines, and if you and I do not want to be left far behind we will have to polish up our rusty weapons and get into the fight with new zest.

Above all men I love a good fighter. By that I do not mean a scrapper, but a man who will fight to the very last gasp for the best things in life. Such a battle, even though it be waged for as small a thing as keeping one's face wreathed with smiles, is important. To do good, be good, and smile always is a fine motto, but a very difficult one to live up to.

I take help in this battle of life wherever I find it. If it be real help I do not worry whether it is orthodox or heterodox, for good is greater than creed, and we are all after results. So when the spirit grows heavy and the body weak I often turn to some uplift book. Perhaps it is called New Thought, or maybe Christian Science, but it does not matter to me by what name it is called as long as the pure gold is there.

No person with a heavy load to bear can

carry it wholly by his own strength; he must draw strength from all about him,—from his friends, his fellow strugglers, the earth, the air, and from the blue heavens.

Life, if we really live, is light and joy, and these things are love,—love for one's fellow men and for God's beautiful universe. And love is also brotherhood,—the perfect chain of humanity with the diadem of love at the center.

I can truly say that blindness has been a blessing to me, although the trail has been dark and the way long. If I still possessed my sight, I would probably be tilling a little farm in the western part of the town of Ashfield, and without eyesight I have done better things than that. That I would have been happier on the surface with eyes goes without saying, but the deep satisfaction that there is in a good fight and things accomplished under adverse circumstances would never have been mine. So I am both willing and glad to trust the Power that shapes our end for the fulfillment of life, trusting for that courage I shall

need each day to follow to the very end the dark trail.

Others have followed it, and why not I? Milton was probably a greater poet and saw holier visions because of his affliction. In adversity he found both strength and inspiration.

Before you close the pages of this little book let me tell you of two of my vanities, for although I have been schooled by a hard tutor, yet I am human.

All my life I have had to compete with college-trained men and women, doing such work as is usually undertaken only by those of the broadest culture, while the only training that I have had has been at the college of Hard Knocks. By arduous study and wide reading I have acquired nearly the equivalent of a college course, but I have no diploma to show for all my labor. So it is my dream that some college or university will some day be good enough to give me academic recognition.

My second vanity is like unto the first, for I have long dreamed of the day (which seems

as distant as ever) when I shall earn money enough to be able to travel, and thus supplement my limited training with that broadening, humanizing experience, a glimpse of the world. If I could see the world, even though through the eyes of my friends, it would give me an infinite amount of pleasure.

Like other vain mortals I have dreams of automobiles, piano players, and many other luxuries, but my longing to travel eclipses all the rest. But I am afraid these things are not for me. Mine has been the hard straight road, with a stiff fight always ahead.

Let me leave with you, dear friend, as a parting thought a little poem by M. D. Babcock, which expresses as much of my creed and life's philosophy as can be gotten into a limited space. It is a true Life's Battle Song, and the best I have to offer.

BE STRONG

Be strong!
We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift;
Shun not the struggle—face it; 'tis God's gift.

Be strong!
Say not, "The days are evil. Who's to blame?"
And fold the hands and acquiesce. O, shame!
Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God's name.

Be strong!
It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day how long;
Faint not—fight on! To-morrow comes the song.

THE END